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## PEOPLE CALLED QUAKERS



# PEOPLE CALLED QUAKERS

By

DORIS N. DALGLISH

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D. N. D.



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## INTRODUCTION

RELIGION has to-day two enemies far more dangerous than the sceptic of last century—the Modernist and the pseudo-mystic. Modernism is a danger to the intellectual life of every religious community, but pseudo-mysticism is a danger which it is infinitely harder to isolate and analyse. All religious experience is, in the long run, mystical, and the sturdy Protestant who complains that other people's priests come between the soul and God wastes valuable time. But although every denomination contains not only its Catholics and its Protestants but its mystics, only one small mystical community has survived in England to give corporate expression to that way of life which is neither Catholic nor Protestant. For this reason, time spent on collecting the portraits of a few Quakers may not be entirely wasted. Much is being written at the moment on the virtues of something which resembles Eastern rather than Western mysticism. One grows tired of hearing of groups of persons who are prepared to advance in mystical experience by sitting in correct postures and, above all, breathing deeply. The Psalmist, eager to pant like the hart in aspiring after holiness, would not have won Mr. Gerald Heard's approval. It may be a very noble effort, but those who are accustomed to methods which accept more gently the inconsistencies of our flesh may be excused for thinking such meditation to be 'icily regular, splendidly null'. 'Bringing the united consciousness into *rapprochement* with the mental element of the universe' and 'filling one's self to capacity with the individual-transcending life' are

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very cold and clumsy verbal substitutes for 'practising the presence of God', and the universal intellectual dishonesty of speaking of 'God' without being able to define the word has hitherto been more creative than the scrupulously cautious phrases of esoteric cults.

There can be few things more pleasant, in anticipation, than writing some account of an institution to which one is deeply attached. In execution, however, few things can be more disagreeable. And when the institution happens to be a religious body which, after a good deal of exploration, one has discovered and has joined, the enterprise of describing it wears a rather ugly aspect. What might have been merely bad taste may begin to lapse into spiritual pride. For other phenomena one is allowed to express enthusiasm, and the most hostile opinion on that enthusiasm will take the form of a smile indulgently tolerant. Were I to write a gloomy book on the condition of Scotland (and such books cannot at present be anything but gloomy), the only serious opposition to it would come from those earnest persons who frequently assure me that it is quite impossible for one to be at once a pacifist and a Nationalist. Again, no one, I should imagine, would gravely blame, although some might mock, if I admitted a certain vague and unsound passion for Oxford. For countries, for universities, even for schools, one is allowed sometimes to feel 'like a lover or a child'. But when it comes to religious denominations, a greater reticence is expected. Stories of conversions may be written (by those who have already established a reputation in any walk of life, since the public appetite to-day finds conversion *qua* conversion utterly tasteless), but even then it is the subjective

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element which prevails. 'These were *my* views . . . the Catholic Church, or the Anglican Church, or the Groups, offered this, which happened to suit *me* . . . *my* longings were at last satisfied,' and so on. Parents, however, exist before they become parents, and have existence separate from the business of bringing up children. Churches exist in spheres above that of the individual. They are things in themselves, they possess objective reality, which can be analysed without self-satisfaction.

It is because I consider the Society of Friends a most fascinating, a positively romantic phenomenon in English religious history, that I am anxious to digress for a moment on its development. Nor, I think, would anyone raise the objection that such digression is superfluous. Numbers of people believe that Quakerism is literally extinct. Others are content to believe that it is some ultra-Protestant aberration to be included with the cults of the Plymouth Brethren, Latter-Day Saints, and Christadelphians. Others, usually themselves orthodox, would like to show goodwill, but cannot help being puzzled by a body of Christians who disregard times and seasons, know of no canonical year, pay their God no tribute of corporate worship on Christmas Day, unless it chance to fall on a Sunday, and let Good Friday pass without any sad ritual. They may also tacitly comment on the fact that a regular Sunday evening 'service', in addition to the morning Meeting, is not to be found at every meeting-house. To these criticisms there are, of course, adequate answers, which cannot be given in a few words.

The convert (in the Quaker phrase, 'the convinced Friend') cannot help having a viewpoint of his own. He has the opportunity of taking a detached and

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strictly objective view of that which he has chosen as well as of feeling his own personal cravings absorbed into the safety of tradition. Perhaps it is only in the vastness of the Catholic Church that he can lose all sense of separation in the joy of discovering what he has been seeking; but even there the fine difference remains, and no amount of intimate experience can take the place of a Catholic upbringing. And when one turns from the millions of Rome to a body which numbers, in the British Empire and Europe, little more than 20,000, and in the United States about 110,000 (the majority of whom have abandoned the essentials of Quakerism for a pale reflection of Protestant Nonconformity), one meets with fresh difficulties. For one thing, there is the problem of 'birthright membership', which means that children, even where only one parent is a Friend, are accepted at birth as members of the Society and are never, as they grow older, subjected to any test or initiatory ceremony. This practice has dangers and drawbacks which are only too obvious. Such a crisis as an outbreak of war reveals a burden of inert and indifferent (even hostile) members who make no pretence of upholding the principles for which their ancestors suffered. They cling sentimentally, however, and sometimes continue to pay subscriptions to the Society which was genuinely the spiritual home of their great-grandparents. They are often indignant at any proposal to remove their names from lists of members, although years may have passed since they attended Meeting. And too often the persons responsible for the revision of such lists are correspondingly sentimental in their desire to avoid banishing nominal members. Frequently, indeed, these troublesome persons protest that, although

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they never appear at Meeting, 'the Society is their spiritual home', and there is some truth in the protest. Unless they possess the distinctive temperament which impels a certain number of birthright members to exchange Quakerism for Anglo-Catholicism or Roman Catholicism (a perfectly logical exchange), both heredity and environment have unfitted them for less extreme faiths. But their existence is always a blur of otiose sentimentality and indifference across the map of Quaker progress, an invisible hindrance to a modern corporate testimony. The dangers of the system are, however, now much more widely recognized, and parents entitled to claim birthright membership for their children not infrequently waive the right, leaving their family free to make voluntary choice hereafter.

This system, together with a long tradition of inter-marriage (it is only seventy years since the habit of disowning from membership those who married non-Friends was abandoned) and of sending children to Friends' boarding-schools, has created a solid body of association and an *esprit de corps* which could not have its parallel in a larger community. The convinced Friend may be forgiven for feeling sometimes that he is surrounded by persons who are all cousins or were all at school at Ackworth or Saffron Walden at the same time. Sometimes he contemplates this cosy, comfortable tradition quite wistfully. At other times, he criticizes. How pleasant to possess those ancestral letters and journals, accounts of travel and family portraits! How agreeable it must be to know that one of your forebears was Clerk to the Meeting for Sufferings! (The Executive Committee of the Society owes this picturesque name to the fact that when it was formed in the seventeenth century, its chief business

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was dealing with the actual and horrible sufferings of Friends in prison.)

It meets in London, once a month, on a Friday morning, and therefore obviously is composed of persons from all parts of the country who are their own masters. The weakness of Quakerism lies in those last few words. When the 'convinced Friend' is not in a mood for wistfully envying, he is prone to regard the Meeting for Sufferings and the other committees on particular subjects which meet in the same week as the preserve of a leisured oligarchy. He may even take base refuge in asserting that, after all, it was different in the time of George Fox, when wealth was by no means the outstanding attribute of his followers. At the same time, he knows, if he is honest with himself, that it is simply impossible, in the modern world, for a religious society which rejects the system of a priesthood to be purely democratic. The wage-earner has every opportunity of taking his part in the affairs of his own Meeting and district. 'The least member in the church hath an office and is serviceable', said Fox, 'and every member hath need one of another.' But in the long run the leisured oligarchy has to be there; and they impose on him no arbitrary edicts. He has very often had his own earlier opportunity of contributing to the shaping of some plan or pronouncement which eventually comes before the Meeting for Sufferings or the Yearly Meeting—the latter, of course, being open to all members as well as to delegates. The leisured oligarchy does its work well. Its methods may sometimes be exasperatingly slow and cautious, but they are not the methods of dictators. Creation, in thought and action, rather than any compulsion, is the thing aimed at.

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And the critic knows all the time that when it comes to the essential and ultimate the oligarchy no longer exists. True, Quakerism is very far from being as equalitarian as Catholicism. Where sacraments exist in the outward and visible form, class distinctions disappear. Where the outward has been rejected and the inward emphasized, distinctions not so much of class as of intellectual equipment and perception are bound to exist. But it is not committees which matter, in the long run. It is the Meeting for Worship. 'Friends', said Fox in an unforgettable exhortation, 'meet together and know one another in that which is eternal, which was before the world was.' In a corporate silence based on such an intention all petty criticism vanishes.

So long a preamble on the psychology of converts is rendered the more necessary because histories of Quakerism, already almost too numerous, have always been written from the angle of the 'birthright member'. Authors who have never lived outside that compact and intimate inner society which I have indicated write impeccable accounts of their hereditary faith, which go to swell the mass of purely denominational literature. It is inevitable that they should see the landscape which has surrounded them from childhood as something very different from that which the traveller discovers. Constant familiarity may have persuaded the natives into a specious tranquillity; but the traveller is more wary and more critical. He may have been a long time on the road. He may be very tired. That which he was seeking has so long tantalized him with mirage and dream that when he discovers that somewhere among humanity it has come to evolution, life is suddenly 'all a wonder

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and a wild desire'. But his attitude towards this institution, in submitting to which he realizes himself the more, must always bear the marks of his journey. What he has come to is so precious. He cannot forget the dangers he noticed on the road, buildings which collapsed for lack of a sure foundation, stake and scaffold and religious battle-field, and the stalls of those twentieth-century magicians who traffic in the amulets and charms of every modern substitute for religion. And he finds many of his co-religionists gazing rather wistfully from their spiritual home towards those very hobgoblins which he is thankful to have escaped. A diet from childhood too exclusively Quaker has sharpened their appetite for those supposed intellectual refreshments which were denied to their ancestors. Is it altogether a tradition of tolerance which inspires their flirtations with leaders of cranky modern thought who would retreat abashed if they had one glimpse of essential Quakerism? Or have they, after years of Puritanism, rationalized into tolerance a primitive longing for mental dissipation? Whatever it is, there they are, so far from hesitating to condemn Modernism and Liberal Protestantism that they are in great danger of betraying the citadel of their Society to mere humanism. Some are almost indifferent as to whether they preach Unitarianism or not. The convert, who may have already experimented with these dry substitutes for nourishment, can hardly be blamed for exasperation. And someone tells him the Society is moribund, and someone else says that naturally it has parted with mysticism in the course of time, since there is no formula for breeding generation after generation of mystics. (It is true that many Friends who have earned fame for their

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pioneer work in social reform do not appear to have been temperamentally mystical; but the fact remains that they owed freedom and vitality for conducting their experiments to the fact that they had been brought up in a body founded on belief in the validity of mystical experience.) He may, as I do, feel that he owes more than he can express to the Society of Friends. He sees it wantonly misrepresenting itself to public opinion, and he fears that others in need may come to look, and may be disappointed.

Too late for love, too late for joy . . .  
The enchanted dove upon her branch  
Died without a mate;  
The enchanted princess in her tower  
Slept, died, behind the grate . . .  
Is she fair now as she lies?  
Once she was fair . . .

And indeed she has been very fair. Like Mr. Chesterton, I refuse to be an 'apologetic apologist' for the institution I have chosen. He admitted to being proud of what some onlookers considered the mental degradation of being tied by creeds and fettered by dogma; and rightly so. One cannot be in love with a person or a way of life for negative and anarchic qualities, but only for what is positive and what bears fruit. It is true that some eminent Victorians did seem to have achieved the perfection of devout scepticism, but loyalty to a negative is short-lived and sterile. There is dogma at the heart of Quakerism, as there is at the heart of all Christian mysticism, if only those who adhere to it would frankly state it instead of uneasily evading the suggestion that possibly their

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faith is based upon one or two assumptions which no individual could hope ever to verify by sheer personal experience. It is exasperating to the convert to find his co-religionists keeping up an almost shame-faced attitude towards dogma, as though they sincerely believed that a religious society with as fine a tradition as theirs could possibly have had no basic principles stronger than subjective opinion, and yet have survived its early persecutions and its own subsequent adherence to a negative type of mysticism. It cannot be too often repeated, as much for their sakes as for the sake of the onlooker, that George Fox never repudiated a single article of the Apostles' Creed. Nor did the mentality and the theology of his time permit him to indulge in complicated talk about employing the traditional Christian phraseology in any 'symbolic' way. He was no twentieth-century Modernist. He never intended his followers to rejoice over a Unitarian sermon in an Anglican cathedral as over a sign of true Christian progress. Unfortunately it often happens that those illogical persons among his followers who believe that the repudiation of creeds is a greater proof of spiritual manliness than the acceptance of them, are the more conspicuous and the more vocal. These do not hesitate to applaud the findings of the Modern Churchmen's Union and any other pronouncements which aim at offering the contemporary world religion without tears. Theologically-minded spectators (if such still exist) are almost justified in remarking that what they had sometimes suspected is true; those Quakers are not really Christians. There they are, giving approval to a vague humanistic doctrine which now and then finds it convenient to borrow the ideology of faith. And although it is true that such dis-

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criminating critics are now too rarely to be found, one or two may be quietly exercising their faculties and may, from the most inconvenient quarters, be observed to give the testimony against these unschooled individualists. Nor can a religious society fairly complain of being misunderstood and misrepresented when it has gone so far in the direction of bartering its mystical birthright for a few Modernist dogmas. Fortunately, it is still true that in the long run the collective consciousness of Friends is sufficiently sensitive to reject this fruitless intellectualism. Ultimately, just as it appears that they are about to capitulate to mere subjectivism, here and there voices which can be trusted are raised. The Society returns from its intellectual *détours*, recognizing, until the next temptation, that it has its own peculiar function. That function is not to enlarge yet farther the scope of the sentimental Christo-centric religion of to-day, whose exponents waste valuable time in writing book after book which shall reconcile Christianity to 'modern thought'. A Fundamentalist American Friend, the story goes, prayed to be 'delivered from the dangers of modern thought, from the perils of all kinds of thought', and the phrases are horribly appropriate. For other denominations, whose express and original *raison d'être* was to demonstrate 'the dissidence of dissent and the protestantism of the Protestant religion', perpetual exposition and dialectic may be right and natural. These bodies were from the first circumstantial and factitious. They came into being in order to champion some doctrine which was regarded as part of a static intellectual universe; or sometimes, as with Methodism and the Oxford Movement, they owed their existence to the devotion of men who loved

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an institution and were determined to save it from the menace of spiritual decay. But the championship of some one particular doctrine, such as justification, or the appeal to antiquity, is a limited and partial basis for any religious experiment, and the season of its service is bound to come to an end. The leaders of such movements accept, all the time, much more than they challenge, and their experience of being unarmed, naked, and helpless is limited to the most intense moments of their personal devotions. From the beginning, English Protestantism was insular, English Nonconformity parochial; but George Fox was a mystic and could not be satisfied with anything less than the universe. Creeds and apologetics he might be said to disregard. Perhaps he might more accurately be described as unconscious of their presence. When he did notice the accretions of history, he swept all aside. His friend Francis Howgill expressed in a memorable passage something of this preoccupation with infinity:

‘If you build upon anything or have confidence in anything which stands in time and is on this side eternity and the Being of beings, your foundations will be swept away, and night will come upon you and all your gathered-in things and taken-on and imitated will all fail you. . . . Why gad you abroad? Why trim you yourselves with the saints’ words when you are ignorant of the life? Return, return to Him that is the first Love, and the firstborn of every creature, who is the Light of the world. . . .’

Fox hurled aside all those things which were gathered-in and taken-on and imitated. The compulsion of his desire drove him back to the *Ungrund* of Boehme, of whose writings he certainly was not

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ignorant. Other writings also had mysteriously brought to England, from Continental leaders and their groups of followers, the contagion of mystical experience. These had carried on, in the face of persecution and excommunication, the tradition of the religion of the Spirit as opposed to the religion of outward authority, the tradition which, from the days of Tertullian and the Montanists, had periodically embodied itself in small communities bearing most of the characteristics of what seventeenth-century England labelled as 'Quakerism'. Their concern was for the universal element in the soul of man, for the Divine Dark and the flight of the alone to the Alone. With the instinct of poets, they ignored the temporal and the historical and yet were able to see these elements as re-created in the light of their assumption (or their knowledge) that the whole of man's life, his appetites and efforts and achievements, were for ever enfolded in the creative glory of God's love.

The history of most contemporary religious thought is a history of waste. Non-essentials bulk largely and essentials are too often tackled in the wrong order.

Twelve Prophets our unlearn'd forefathers knew,  
We are scarce satisfy'd with twenty-two:  
A single Psalmist was enough for them,  
Our list of Authors rivals A. and M.:  
They were content Mark, Matthew, Luke and John  
Should bless th' old-fashioned Beds they lay upon:  
But we, for ev'ry one of theirs, have two,  
And trust the watchfulness of blessed Q.

The tragedy is that no one has yet proved by observation or discerned by faith that a more widely

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diffused knowledge of 'blessed Q' has in the slightest degree raised our national level of spiritual life. Merely to make more accessible the results of scholastic research and to regard them with the sentimental veneration of the modern Protestant does nothing for the soul. They are matters to be accepted and then laid aside if proportion is to be observed. The belief (so thoroughly characteristic of modern Protestantism and, despite appearances, so repugnant to the true *ethos* of Quakerism) that increase in knowledge must automatically quicken the soul reduces religion to the level of a physical element or a human invention. The New Testament is not oxygen, and study-circles are not mysticism. One act of contrition has more force than half a dozen arguments.

'An instant of pure love is more precious to God and the soul, more profitable to the church, than all other good works together, though it may seem as if nothing were done.'<sup>1</sup>

There is something to be said for believing, as the Groups do, in theological illiteracy, and it might be argued that they, no less than Karl Barth, represent the human soul's vague suspicion that all is not well with humanistic Christianity: that the Fundamentalists at least do not waste valuable time in rewriting their creeds in terms of 'modern thought'. Sometimes, on an inspection of yet another batch of restatements, this menace of preferring knowledge to feeling appears to have no limits. This policy of sending the soul to school to the brain (not to the mind) is a perfectly logical procedure on the part of ordinary Protestantism. Its pioneers, whatever their claims, never really acted on behalf of the soul, for they were too apt

<sup>1</sup> St. John of the Cross.

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to confuse it with what von Hügel calls the 'claimful' and the 'poor, shabby, bad, all-spoiling self'. They played religion as they might have played chess. They are not to be blamed for the complete sterility in the twentieth century of the sects to which they gave such a sandy foundation. George Fox, however, knew nothing of turning salvation into an intelligent game. He accepted no existing framework and made no adaptations, except the enormous one which consisted in finding a new level of life. He called upon the world and upon the individual to strip off the false personality, the baser self, in the various forms which custom and convenience had manufactured. 'Two and two only luminously self-evident beings—myself and my Creator' was his cry, as it was Newman's. Not 'myself' in any way 'conditioned', as the phrase goes to-day, but nakedly helpless; not 'myself' fighting with intellectual weapons for some ecclesiastical privilege and the husks of a specious freedom, but 'myself' humbly desiring to be brought into the smallest measure of unity with the divine mystery of the universe. Even in his own apocalyptic century, when the wildest aspirations were the mere bread and butter of English religious thought, there was an unusual clarity and a poetic force in his highest statements. Such words as 'the hidden unity in the Eternal Being' and 'Friends, walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every man' are appalling in their simplicity; and most of the thought of that epoch of Puritan confusion is far from simple. Sects were born amid ecstasies and animosities, and perished because they failed to nourish the soul and to conform to that ideal of spiritual health which our inmost spirit instinctively demands. The Society

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which Fox built up was built upon healthy lines and it did not perish. On the contrary, it grew and flourished under the most savage persecution. Its development presents one of the fascinating phenomena in the history of English religion. Observing the manner in which Fox seized the breaking links of Europe's long chain of experiment in the formation of mystical communities, and repaired them and worked the result into the fabric of English life, one realizes with renewed force that the movements of history are august. (It must be remembered, in all fairness, that Fox took hold of a tradition largely Teutonic, so that its adaptation to the Anglo-Saxon temperament was not abnormally difficult. The leader has yet to appear who could make palatable to Celts or Latins the attitude to life which is called Quakerism.)

The seventeenth century and its frenzied righteousness passed away. There were no more poets who spoke of life as 'a quickness which my God hath kissed'. That does not prove that insensibility prevailed and imagination died. They were still alive, but they concealed themselves.

And still Fox's Society flourished. Its members became decent tradesmen, not wild enthusiasts; instead of tortured prisoners there arose a people secluded from the world by peculiarities of speech and dress. Persecutions ceased. Stability and respectability were the hall-marks of Quakerism. Already there were being laid the inconspicuous foundations of industrial wealth which was to reach amazing figures by the end of the nineteenth century. Quietism prevailed, and although the basic impulse to evangelize the whole world still bore fruit in the shape of long, toilsome, and adventurous missionary journeys in England and

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America, the emblem of eighteenth-century Quakerism is the spiritual journal. Here, in page after page of introspection, conducted according to perfectly orthodox mystical teaching, are the records of souls which aimed at a perfect detachment from all intellectual and rational support. Friends were well read in the writings of Continental Quietists and cited Molinos, Madame Guyon, and Fénelon to better purpose than do some of their descendants Streeter and Inge. Whittier, looking back to the example of 'the Quaker of the olden time', remarked such characteristics as

that deep insight which detects  
All great things in the small,  
And knows how each man's life affects  
The spiritual life of all,

and if that peculiar sensitiveness to the inner needs of others and to the sufferings of the world is still characteristic, it owes its survival to those eighteenth-century lives. It is true that, by the end of the century, insistence on separation from the world and a rigidly enforced conformity with habits of dress, speech, and conduct had bred a somewhat dreary formalism. But this phase of Quakerism, often misjudged, did invaluable work in laying down rules for the ordering of the inner life, and its readiness, its yearning, for the cross of self-abnegation led to an extraordinary enhancement of spiritual vitality. The typical eighteenth-century Friend, who endured long agonies before appearing in the ministry (i.e. taking vocal part in meetings), was an illiterate man or woman so far as books were concerned, and the Quietism already

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referred to taught that any desire for a purely intellectual enlightenment must be eradicated. Nevertheless, constant suppression of personality in worship, so that the Spirit might find in the individual a vehicle completely purified, led to invasions from the subconscious which no modern research could equal. Psychic and telepathic powers of speaking to the condition of someone present or of entering into the needs of someone absent were frequently met with—this, we should remember, in that Augustan England which we habitually regard as abandoned to infidel reason and spiritual lethargy. But while architects and builders were busy with the incomparable houses which we are now demolishing, here and there over the rural landscape of Georgian England, the obscure Quaker tradesman or farmer (or his wife or daughter) was enfranchized in another world, the world of Julian of Norwich and St. John of the Cross.

In yonder English home  
We thrive on mortal food and sleep.

They were citizens of a state which simply did not bother its head about the Reformation and the triumphs of Protestantism, and they were as far as was Fox himself from believing that religion had anything to do with theological arguments. For them there was no final and debatable Calvary, but the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; no election or justification, dead words or 'notions', but the wooing of the soul by its divine Lover. The philanthropic activity and the mental acumen of their descendants they would have repudiated as 'creaturely', but it should never be forgotten that it was the intensity of

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their inner lives, to them so much more real than the outward shows, which laid the foundations. Their community—and this is now occasionally overlooked—was the '*religious Society of Friends*'.

In both England and America the nineteenth century was to show how tragic are the failure and waste which result from Quaker excursions into theology and 'modern thought'. It is a sorry record of schism and hostility, and in reading it one longs for the unintellectual wisdom and the poetry of the earlier Friends. Mystical religion vanished from the picture, while those who held to the doctrine (or what they believed to be the doctrine) of the early Friends relating to the Inward Light challenged, in the name of orthodoxy, those who wished to transform the Society into an Evangelical body. These aimed at a Protestantism of the crudest type, fettered by that doctrine of Biblical inspiration which Quakerism had always treated in somewhat cavalier fashion. The results of this unhappy conflict in territory with which neither party was really familiar were more fateful in America.

In England, as the century wore on, Friends became more and more prosperous. From John Bright downwards, they decorously played their part in the social scene; became industrial magnates, railway lords, bankers, doctors, Town Councillors, Mayors, and sometimes, as a result, joined the Church of England; produced a few professional and many respectable amateur scientists, and a great many amateur painters, and no writers. (Shorthouse, certainly, was a birth-right member of the Society, but could find no æsthetic peace outside the Church of England.) As a legacy from the earlier theological upheaval, they plunged into social work, and mission meetings and temperance

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propaganda came to be connected with a somewhat smug and Evangelical Quakerism which had forgotten the mysticism of its founders and remembered only their individualism. Finally, at the end of the century (during which membership had dropped to a very depressing figure, about 7,000 below the present total), there came a very real and in many ways heroic crusade on behalf of intellectualism. Its leaders naturally could not foresee the world from 1914 onwards or anticipate the affronts which Modernism was to offer to spiritual integrity or the surrender of most denominations to the demands of humanism. They were young and they lived in a season of national optimism, and they longed to free spiritual life from the damping criticism of the elders. They were devoted to the Society and to the nobler traditions of their Quaker ancestors, and they sincerely believed that intellect had some innate connection with virtue. Had anyone possessing a spirit of divination been able to look both backward and forward and told them that their whole-hearted activity was going to make it hard for the Society, in the nineteen-thirties, to return to mysticism, they would have been deeply pained. But a long Puritan tradition (we should remember that this in itself was a mark of treachery, since the original Puritans were the enemies, not the friends, of Fox) filled them with an immoderate and almost voluptuous pleasure in sheer intellectualism. There is no harm to be compared to the harm done by noble persons, and one is almost ashamed to complain that it is to such devoted spirits that Quakerism owes a recent ambiguous comment—‘in the estimation of the more thoughtful unbeliever no denomination ranks higher’. Also, the convert of twenty or thirty years

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later can always be silenced by being asked if he would really have cared to join a Society of Friends as limited and perhaps complacent as it was before these zealous younger members set going the whole dangerous machinery of religious conferences and Summer Schools. One certainly need know very little of Quaker history to understand how weak the mystical element had grown in the nineteenth century. It is not supremely our extra common sense or virtue which makes us, in nineteen thirty-eight, aware of the unloveliness and the futility of modern religious thought. Prosperity purchased at the price of re-armament, and a dozen other hideous circumstances, have taught us what follows upon the propagation of a theology too vague and too tolerant. And within their own relatively tiny circle, this was what certain Friends unconsciously laboured towards at the end of the nineteenth century when they did their best to substitute for Quakerism Liberal Protestantism thinly veneered with mystical experience. For Liberal Protestantism can scarcely be described as a religion. It is an ideology ranking little higher than Fascism or Marxism. 'You can have as your centre God; or you can have as your centre sudden and complete human Progress and Perfection: you cannot have both.'<sup>1</sup> Authentic Quakerism soon found itself persuaded into a country of the mind for which it was never meant. Catholicism (the philosophy, not the ecclesiastical system) was then less widely understood. Even the legacy of the Oxford Movement was apt to be described as mere 'ritualism', and Presbyterians and English Nonconformists were far from discovering that a certain element of ritual will attract those to

<sup>1</sup> Von Hügel, *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion*.

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whom intellectual sermons speak in vain. It seems obvious that these Quaker reformers understood the *ethos* of their inherited faith so well that they must have known how narrow is the frontier between it and Catholicism, and how habits and turns of devotional feeling and phrasing slip to and fro across it. Presumably narrower interpretations of religious systems than ours to-day prevented them from recognizing gold when they found it and precipitated them into the increasing rush for counterfeit mental coin. From childhood they had heard that Fox had refused to admit that 'being bred at Oxford or Cambridge' necessarily fitted men to be ministers of Christ, but the spirit of their age was too strong for them. They aimed at 'a teaching ministry', and the exposition, in Meeting, of difficult portions of the Bible.

This was not on the lines of traditional usage and the Quietist exaltation of the empty mind and passive faculties. Expositions of the Scriptures are matters which can be analysed, described, weighed, measured; but the real 'ministry' in a Friends' Meeting is literally indescribable and imponderable, a conjunction of powers within and without the self which finds expression in words, and raises the self, for a moment, to the level of the artist and the lover. The intellectual preparation involved by the newer theory would have horrified their forefathers and nearly broken the heart of Fox himself. 'It struck at my life' were the words he had used on hearing the very sound of a church-bell, so acutely did he diagnose the sheer formalism which it might very well then symbolize. But his spiritual descendants were less finely sensitive to the equally menacing appeal of modern religious criticism, and firmly believed that it was able to enhance that

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element in the soul of pure mysterious truth of which the early Friends had spoken with joy and certainty. We are still wandering in that labyrinth of good intentions whose foundations were then laid, enduring 'all the earnestness and unselfish enthusiasm that is squandered because of mere stupidity, and of the compact and complex organization for preventing thought which Christendom has built up—meetings, rousing books on race and colour problems, books which, after a great pomp and parade of "facing the situation" in the end say nothing at all, speeches, periodicals, articles, and clichés by the bucketful'.<sup>1</sup>

To be thus fervently concerned with these aspects of doctrine which the intellect can strain off and keep for itself is not the duty of the mystic. He may at times appear to be profoundly careless of what Fox called 'notions', but it is because he cannot see them as anything but subordinate to psychic states and dispositions. And so in one sense the Christian (or the Western) mystic may be said always to disparage slightly the relevance of dogma. One need not be essentially mystic to shrink from such matters as doctrinal Commissions whose findings reduce the Godhead to print and subsections of reports. Regarded 'in the life', to use a phrase traditional among Friends, the ridiculousness of that is divine. Regarded otherwise, it is only another proof of the failure of mankind.

In the long run there is no middle way. To say, as some have said, that there are only two really comprehensive ways of regarding spiritual truth, which embrace, in so regarding it, the whole of one's life, and that they are Catholicism and Quakerism, is no

<sup>1</sup> Edward Thompson, *An Indian Day*.

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exaggeration. The extremes meet—a hierarchy of priests and the priesthood of the laity, the richly or gaudily adorned building and the bare unconsecrated meeting-house, the seven sacraments and the determination (arrogant as one admits that it sounds, and weak as may be the achievement) to reject the smallest outward manifestation of the holy and look upon all life as sacramental. There is the same idea of the Divine Humanity (for those who employ such terms), and a like concentration on ruling the inner life, which is usually far less marked in the Protestant, so fearful of losing his independence.

One feels that it is a very small section indeed of the Society which, for example, would regard a crucifix or Catholic devotions with the touch of condescension and suspicion which often characterizes the ordinary Protestant spectator. For tolerance, even if carried rather far towards intellectual innovations, always marked the Friend after the initial bad religious manners of Fox's own day were outgrown. Catholicism, it is true, has not, except in the Anglican cult of it, the rebel instinct which walks in such respectable clothing in the Society of Friends and declares calmly that the State has no supreme claim upon conscience. If each of these ways of life could learn something from the other, time and personality which are now squandered in the compromises of Protestantism could be more fruitfully employed and man might enjoy a new reading of history. Catholicism needs its revolutionaries and its conscientious objectors, and a dose of compulsory Catholicism might be a very good thing for me and for my co-religionists.

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ONE of the major tragedies of the Quaker world to-day is the absence of any poet. The solitary English experiment in mystical religion neither produces poets nor attracts them. It does not even produce them only to lose them to other communions or to the unchartered freedom of no communion at all. Obituary notices in *The Times* frequently point out unobtrusively that persons distinguished in other capacities 'came of good Quaker stock', but this statement can never be used of poets. Were a poet (or even a writer of good average prose) to join the Society, he would lose his freedom. Public opinion would expect him to be social and to be philanthropic. He would be expected to attend Monthly Meeting, and there, while controlling a cup of tea and a cress sandwich, he would be asked whether poetry could find a formula for combating totalitarianism, or whether he would like to address a conference. (The Monthly Meeting is the most important unit of church government among Friends, and comprises the members of Meetings scattered over a largish area.) He would certainly lose his freedom. Only the Church of Rome and the Church of England can minister sacramentally to an artist's needs and be willing to leave him alone when he is not in church. They appear to understand that a lack of the gregarious instinct is not always sin and that the more highly developed type of social conscience requires more solitude. So Quakerism, always so much happier and more useful in its relations with science than in its uneasy approaches to art, continues to be too often satisfied with the

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commonplaces of poetry. Its critical standards are too often those which consider Browning an optimist because of Pippa's world-outlook and Shakespeare a pessimist because Macbeth felt that life was a tale signifying nothing.

No one denies that Whittier, although no major poet, was a writer of far greater powers than might be looked for in the limited Quakerism of his age. The lofty compassion of his anti-slavery poems deserves to be much more widely known, and in his best devotional verse he can come very near Newman and Keble in refinement and intensity. Indeed, for his own communion, if not for all Christendom, he wrote hymns that are not inferior to *Praise to the holiest in the height* and the finest verses of *The Christian Year*. It is when one forces him into the arena among universal literary comparisons that one realizes how much of drama, rhetoric, and verbal subtlety an English classical education had supplied to its religious poets. If Whittier sometimes used diction which academic standards might condemn, he was capable of writing things no less terrifyingly simple than the hymns in *The Dream of Gerontius*. He could say that in silent worship

The world that time and sense have known  
Falls off and leaves us God alone.

Very near about us lies  
The realm of spiritual mysteries.  
The sphere of the supernal powers  
Impinges on this world of ours.

But Whittier was not the first Quaker poet, neither was Lamb's friend, the gentle Bernard Barton, nor

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Coleridge's friend, Charles Lloyd, nor John Scott, whose sensitive perceptions hated the sound of the recruiting sergeant's drum. The first real poem written by a Friend dates, not surprisingly, from the early days of the Society. It would have been strange if the first stages of a seventeenth-century experiment which did not until later fetter itself with Puritanical scruples had produced no poetry. It was a golden age for religious poets in England. Never again was the poetry of religion to be so magnificently a thing of ditch and hedgerow.

Earth does not show so brave a sight  
As when a single soul does fence  
The batteries of alluring sense . . .

This striving of the soul in its heavenward pilgrimage was a commonplace. Nothing like it was seen again in English literature until the Victorians began to writhe over loss of faith, and their lyrical cries were muffled by the sound of progress.

It was in November 1689 that Thomas Story composed the unusual spiritual song by virtue of which he may truly be called the first Quaker poet, although at that time he had not formally united himself with Friends. The date of his birth is uncertain, but it is recorded that he was about eighty at the time of his death in 1742. He was a Cumberland man of good family, having a brother in the Church and a brother in the Army, and being educated himself for the Law. Fencing and music were the chief pastimes of his youth. By 1687 we find him still using 'the national way of worship' and attending services in Carlisle Cathedral, where the 'prayers, postures, songs, organs

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cringing, and shows' appeared to him 'little else than an abridgement of the Popish Mass'. (Story remained a Protestant Friend throughout his life.) He had by then attended one of the meetings of this new sect which so strenuously rejected all outward forms and maintained that even the Scriptures had no infallible power greater than the power of the divine particle in man, by which he could hold communion with the altogether Divine. But in those days of widespread religious enquiry, one such visit was merely what might have been expected from any thoughtful young man who was not feeling quite at home in the Church of England.

Story's autobiography gives us an extraordinarily vivid and attractive picture of the time. Spiritual journals were abundantly produced by Quaker writers throughout the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth. No other denomination can have produced so many in proportion to its membership. Naturally they conform to the spiritual fashion of each generation. As time goes on, they uniformly reflect the life of a denomination which, although always ready to travel over Europe and America in the cause of 'truth', yet withdrew more and more from the world. The reader has sometimes almost to guess at contemporary fashions. On the other hand, to Fox and his immediate followers withdrawal from the world would have seemed treachery. A man—or a woman—had to abide in it and aim at changing it. To its subservience to false outward standards the 'Friend in the Truth', the 'Child of the Light', must oppose those 'testimonies' which made the path of the convert so trying to himself and to his respectable relations. It was no laughing matter, in

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the seventeenth century, to have a member of one's family turn Quaker. Nowadays the gravest difficulty is a prospective imprisonment as a conscientious objector. (Convinced Friends are, I think I may say, uniformly pacifists. It is only a birthright member who can acquire the art of being one of the church literally militant.) But the first converts had to face a persistent domestic persecution on account of the scruples which have served their purpose and vanished or been adapted—the refusal to address a single person as 'you', the refusal to take an oath, the refusal to call the months and days by their 'heathen names'. Most searching also was the loyalty to that testimony which we, with our altered social manners, find, perhaps, the hardest to understand—the testimony against 'hat-honour'. At a time when the hat was worn so much more constantly, the refusal to remove it in courtesy to elders and betters was often the most exasperating feature of conversion. The father of Thomas Story, however, did not believe, as did the fathers of Thomas Ellwood and William Penn, that a thrashing was the best means of dealing with such a scruple on the part of a son as old as the modern undergraduate. Smiling at this seventeenth-century obstinacy, which protested against social inequalities and sham, we sometimes envy. The inequalities and shams are now well hidden, and are not radically threatened by the provision of wireless and silk stockings for all.

In Story's youth England was more English than she has ever been since. The country revealed in his autobiography was the country of freedom and poetry which continues to puzzle the rest of Europe. Story could write a lovely style—an English imaginative, vigorous, and downright, which suggests Cotswold

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buildings and Oxford as she was meant to be, and sets the modern reader speculating on its possible sources. A few sentences from an account of a dream may be quoted. He saw a man 'habited as a post or carrier sounding a trumpet . . . its sound had cogent attractive virtue . . . he took the trumpet from his mouth and held it in his right hand . . . his mouth a little open, and his breath glowing therefrom as a lambent flame, and as one hearkening, with deep attention, for fresh orders from the king of kings . . . in the twinkling of an eye, he set the trumpet to his mouth again with majesty and zeal'.

In sermons which he preached, which were frequently taken down in shorthand, he often used language with an authority and freshness which were characteristic of Quaker speech in the days before it borrowed the stifling mantle of Evangelical phraseology. He will enlarge on 'silence of all the imaginations, cogitations, agitations, desires, affections, passions, and hurries of the natural mind, which is ever in action and fluctuating, passing from object to object . . . from all the hurries, and runnings, and willings, and imaginations of mankind . . . silence of the clamorous importunities of the desires in the heart, save towards God only'.

From the earliest pages of this journal we are forced to be conscious of another England, an England we find exceedingly hard to understand, where strangers dining together in taverns discussed neither cylinders and carburettors, nor even economics, but theology. At the time of the Carlisle assizes in 1688, Story happened to be dining thus, in a company including two clergymen, when a 'Popish gentleman' started a debate on transubstantiation. The young man

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waited for the clergymen to play their part, but 'they minding their plates, and hanging down their heads, with their countenances veiled by their hats', he felt obliged to begin, 'Sir, you of the church of Rome take these words literally . . .' and concluded a long speech with, 'Could you think we would all sit silent to hear you propagate such notions, and make no opposition?' To read it, and to picture the scene, indulges our taste for intellectual pleasantries and an enjoyable exercise of the historical imagination; but suddenly the mystery is there. Scarcely conscious of it ourselves, perhaps only conscious that others have made understanding it the chief business of life, we faintly perceive the remote become intimate, the thing accepted by the mind transformed into a consuming fire that would feed on the heart. Reason complains that it is absurd to try to take the journey back into the God-seeking England which was Story's home. It would involve an elimination on too gigantic a scale, the stripping off of layer upon layer of information and cleverness and prejudice. We need to look carefully at each piece of scientific or literary or political apparatus as we lay it aside, and even then we are far from being able to separate essentials from non-essentials. Where we seem to have much, Story had little, and where he seemed to have little, we have much—too much for our soul's health.

His life did not change outwardly for some little time after the conversation already quoted. 'The lust of the flesh, of the eye, and the pride of life had their objects presented: the airs of youth were many and potent: strength, activity, and comeliness of person, were not a-wanting.' All this, however, concealed a spiritually apprehensive condition which 'began to

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put a secret stain upon the world and all its glory'. The unhurrying chase had begun, the unperturbèd pace was audible. He could not escape any more than, at heart, he could have desired to escape. Suddenly, at length, on the evening of the first of February 1689, the climax came. 'The Lord brake in upon me unexpectedly, quick as lightning from the heavens. . . . My mind seemed separated from my body, plunged in utter darkness . . . in the midst of this confusion and amazement, where no thought could be formed, or any idea retained, save grim, eternal death possessing my whole man, a voice was formed and uttered in me, as from the center of boundless darkness: "Thy will, O God, be done; if this be thy act alone, and not my own, I yield my soul to thee."'

About the same time next day he experienced such a realization of the divine presence as he had never known before. 'The divine essential truth was now self-evident, there wanted nothing else to prove it. I needed not to reason about him; all reasoning was superseded and immersed by an intuition of that divine and truly wonderful evidence and light which proceeded from himself alone.'

These things he kept secret, although outwardly he put off his 'usual airs' and 'jovial actions and address', laid aside the sword which he had worn as a 'modish and manly ornament', burned his musical instruments and simplified his dress. Finding that solitude and silence fed his inner life more sustainingly, he ceased to attend public worship; but as yet he had no conscious determination to join the people with whom he had worshipped once only.

It was in November of that same year that he composed the 'poem', *A Song of Praise to the Saints in Zion*,

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which is always associated with his name and to which no exact parallel exists in Quaker literature. He has left us a full account of the writing of it.

‘Silence was commanded in me, though not by me’ is the simple, memorable phrase which he employs; and in another place he writes that he remained under the daily influence of the divine presence ‘till one afternoon his mind was totally silenced thereby until the fourth hour in the evening, when, alone in his chamber and a little paper book lying on the table, which he had made without any purpose . . . and pen and ink standing there, the holy spirit of truth began to move in his heart in that silence, and set the things written in this book in the view of his mind . . . and then he wrote and, continuing writing till about midnight, the impulse ceased.’

The composition is too long to quote in its entirety.

‘Come, ye ragged ones, come, sit down before the King; for behold, he is meek and lowly in heart and loveth the humble.

‘They gaz’d upon me, they said I was mad, distracted, and become a fool; they lamented because my freedom came . . . I said, What am I that I should receive such honour? but he removed the mountains out of my way, and by his secret workings prest me forward. He gave me a reward, and behold, I had done no work, he gave me wages even before I had wrought in his vineyard. . . .

‘They said, Behold a man foolish in his imaginations, seeking after vanity, and given over to believe lies: but I regarded not, for I had the jewel in prospect, the promised land in view . . .

‘I was silent before the Lord, as a child not yet weaned;

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‘He put words in my mouth; And I sang forth his praise with an audible voice . . .

‘He called for my life, and I offered it at His footstool; but He gave it me as a prey, with unspeakable addition.

‘He called for my will, and I resigned it at His call; but He returned me His own, In token of His love.

‘He called for the world, and I laid it at His feet, With the crowns thereof; I withheld them not at the beckoning of His hand.

‘But mark the benefit of exchange: For He gave me, instead of earth, a kingdom of eternal peace. And, in lieu of crowns of vanity, A crown of glory . . .

‘He gave me joy, which no tongue can express, And peace which passeth understanding. I begged Himself, and He gave me all.’

At first Story thought of destroying what he had written. It appeared to him to be a presumptuous claim to experience which had not yet been his. Nevertheless, he hesitated and did not obey the impulse. According to evidence which none but he could test, the words seemed to have been dictated by ‘the Mind of Truth’, and he aspired to a condition which should win such experience. This spiritual document was accordingly preserved and remains unique in Quaker literature. Others among the early Friends had written striking prose, as was only to be expected in an England where spirituality met with a classical culture as yet unhackneyed. Penn could write beautiful English, and Isaac Pennington could relieve long bouts of wrestling with texts by phrases of such rich simplicity as ‘Love is the beautiful thing’ or ‘a necessitous force of love and life pursuing me’. The

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lingering compulsion of the Middle Ages still saw to it that when a man happened to be concerned for his soul, everything that his mind had fed upon, down to the turning of a sentence and the placing of an adjective, contributed to the struggle and the ecstasy. If he wrote at all, unless he avowedly wrote fiction or history (and the inclusion of history is very questionable), the soul had to come in. Fourteen thousand books can be published now in one year in Britain, but it is understood that the only authors who may decently touch upon the soul are an idle poet here and there (and then the reader probably says, 'Oh, that's only Mr. Eliot again. *C'est son métier*'), and the industrious authors of New Testament exegesis. That is why it is hard but necessary for us to struggle imaginatively and get back to the society and the literature with which a man like Thomas Story was familiar.

He had passed through the hour of inward revolution, and he had composed the poem which was to keep his name illustrious in one religious community; but that community was not yet clearly evident to him as his spiritual home. Reflecting that his recent experiences might enable him to find more satisfaction in the ordinary Anglican service, he attended a church in Carlisle, where 'pomp, noise, and show' were less marked than in the cathedral; but as before, all was dark and dead. So strongly did he realize that there was no food for his soul that he almost felt obliged to come away before the close of the service. For over a year he remained in this condition, hungry for satisfaction, unable to find it, and ignorant of any religious body with usages corresponding to those which instinct told him must, for him, be solely right. It was not

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until May 1691, that 'suddenly and with some surprise' the 'People called Quakers' were brought to his mind. He recalled attending one of their meetings and being struck with them as 'honest, innocent, well-meaning', but no more lasting or forceful impression had remained. Just as the methods of the Groups enjoy to-day a crude popular familiarity, so the small England of Story's time could not help being aware of the sect which one harassed magistrate had dismissed as 'the confounded'st of all religions'. Before the Toleration Act was passed, there had seemed to be no way of stamping out those groups which met for worship in a form unauthorized by the State, sitting long in silent waiting upon God, rejecting priest and creed and outward sacrament, putting up no resistance when the soldiers broke in and dispersed them, submitting like lambs (of a particularly obstinate breed) to their persecutors, and, as soon as they had a moment's freedom, resuming their unlawful meetings. Near Story's own parts, in Westmorland, there had been the Seekers who, from their angle, had been awaiting the message of the immanence of the divine in the human soul which Fox came from Leicestershire to proclaim. They joined forces with him and contributed so intense a spirituality that any neighbour as receptive as Story must have recognized the atmosphere with which they had endowed their scenery, even as the modern tourist recognizes Wordsworthianism.

It was in the west of Cumberland that Story found himself, in May 1691, staying at an inn which was kept by a Friend. It was perfectly easy to ask a few questions which should tell him more about the new sect, and the next day being Sunday, Story rode to

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Meeting at Broughton, 'went among the throng of the people on the forms, and sat still among them in that inward condition and mental retirement'. According to the suddenly amazing expression which he uses in his journal, 'sweet silence was commanded in me by Michael the Prince, Captain-General of the hosts in heaven. . . . The meeting being ended, the peace of God, which passeth all the understanding of natural men, and is inexpressible by any language but itself alone, remained as a holy canopy over my mind, in a silence out of the reach of all words, to where no idea but the word himself can be conceived'.

He attended more meetings. He was invited to be present at one of those business meetings whose methods, according to which no vote is ever taken and anything approaching acute disagreement is, if not obviated, checked by a short silence on the part of the whole company, are nowadays being sometimes adopted in other bodies. The first real test came soon, with the holding of the assizes at Carlisle. An acquaintance who had a suit coming forward and urgently needed a witness to a deed of conveyance thought his lawyer-friend Story was obviously the man. It is hard, perhaps, for us to enter into the embarrassment and self-consciousness which was then the portion of the man who refused to take an oath, but we have to make the effort. 'I will appear and testify; but I cannot swear', said Story, and his indignant friend rejoined, 'What, you are not a Quaker!'

Story experienced in anticipation every degree of worldly scorn and scoffing and family misunderstanding which would be his portion, but he stuck to his resolution. In the morning he went towards the

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court, expecting to be summoned as a witness. But before he reached it, his friend came towards him with the news that his adversary had yielded and an agreement had been reached. Thankful as Story was, he did not escape notoriety in the crowded city. Strangers stared at him and talked about him. Some feigned an unusual civility, others briefly said he was mad. In one of the picturesque asides by which he illuminates the daily scene of that age, we hear that 'one who had been educated at a university cried out, as if he had been surprised with the discovery of some new system, "He knows not a Genus from a Species!"'

Most of the remaining tests of his new loyalty seemed to throng upon him at once. In company with his father and some friends in a tavern, he refused to remove his hat in salutation and refused to drink a health even to the king. (It had been a sudden revulsion from the social tyranny of having to drink health after health to please others which had finally led Fox into the wilderness of the spirit while still very young.) A zealous Presbyterian, the father of the lawyer under whom Story had first studied his profession, having borrowed his Quakerish books sent for him with a view to argument. The long discourse of the convert, who, as he tells us with his eye for detail, observed the pages of his questioner's Bible folded down at the passages which he was prepared to quote, seems to have been received with tolerance. More disturbing still, Story once saw the tears run down his father's face as they sat together, and heard him say, referring to the collection of religious biographies which he was reading, 'I see there have been in former times as great fools as you, to leave their

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friends and preferments in the world for their opinions in religion'.

Story was only one of many who made the same choice in that century, and we read with honour the painful accounts of their conversions. In one respect they were more fortunate than, for example, Newman and those who went with him from the Church of England. There was no tie of affection and loyalty to institutions which they were compelled to leave. No separation from church or university tore their hearts, for all were uniformly weary of the apparent formalism of the Anglican rite and of the petty mental strife of the Puritans. Story found himself in a new world. So, also, after an infinitely deeper and longer agony, did Newman, for Catholic and Protestant inhabit separate universes. But Newman had had to readjust his view of history and his conception of the use of reason. He had been forced to compare two versions of a system and to decide with tragic finality that one was true and the other false—a very different matter from entirely abandoning the outward and asserting that one can live permanently on a scale involving so gigantic a sublimation.

And there were all the tiny but excruciating circumstances of family and social life: the clergyman, 'a wanton, airy man and a little in drink', who cried 'What have we got here, one of the holy brethren?': another clergyman who danced to the fiddle at a gathering in which Story had been helping to draw up a marriage settlement. 'His dance going on heavily, he left it . . . clapped himself down on a seat, and began to defend the use and innocence of music.' There was the 'strict and rich Presbyterian' who complained that Quakers had behaved scandal-

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ously in appearing naked in public and alleging that this was enjoined on them as a testimony against sin. He invited his own father-in-law, who was an Anglican, and an Independent who was 'a great adversary of Friends', to meet with Story, but the Anglican saved the situation by introducing his own dislike of 'prayers with much whining and cant', an objection which came home to his son-in-law. One cannot help lingering over such an episode, for it heightens our sense of a period acutely denominational and emphasizes the twentieth century's exclusive preoccupation with non-essentials.

There was also the curate of Story's clergyman brother, who 'whispered loudly to him at dinner, "This is a tithe-goose," and then fleered'.

Not only socially but economically there were difficulties. Obviously Story as a lawyer had taken a suicidal step in choosing a way of life which forbade the taking of oaths. The problem of how he was to remain at home and support himself was urgent, but any solution of it was deferred by his undertaking a journey to Scotland in 1692 in company with two other Quaker preachers.

From the moment when Fox himself first rode into Scotland and seemed to feel something forbidding and hostile in the air, the country has given Quakerism a cold reception. To adopt this way of life means, for a Scot, taking the step which leaves one supremely *dépaysé*. Story and his companions soon discovered that they were to meet with indifference on the part of Episcopalians and downright savagery from Presbyterians. Like some Quaker travellers of the next century, they observed the change of reception when they reached Highland territory and met with courtesy and

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quiet manners. (Story, like many of his fellow-countrymen abroad, attributed this to the 'English demeanour and aspect' of the Highlanders.)

In 1693 he found himself appointed as one of two Cumberland representatives to the Yearly Meeting in London, and there he became acquainted with Penn. The acquaintanceship was to ripen into close friendship. Story returned home greatly troubled by two matters. The one was his position in his father's house now that he could not support himself by practising law. The other was the inward realization that he ought by now to be able to 'appear in public ministry', in other words, to break the silence of worship with speech that comes no one knows whence. An historical sketch is not the place in which to attempt any discussion of such speech. It is a phenomenon which is literally not to be understood by those who have never been part of it; and those who have, although they may sometimes appear exceedingly matter of fact, not to say critical, towards things so spoken, recognize it as something above analysis. At the time when Story first experienced the birth of this uneasy concern, to take vocal part in worship was regarded as the taking up of a heavy cross, although the dread and self-abasement which it brought were not yet the universal, even the orthodox, symptoms which they were to become to the Quietism of eighteenth-century Friends.

'I had never met with anything so great a cross to my natural disposition as appearing in publick,' Story wrote, 'and, if I might have continued to enjoy the good presence of the Lord any other way, or on any other terms, I had never submitted to it: but those divine wages I could not live without; the countenance

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of the Lord was become my all, and too dear to part with.'

He had a wearisome struggle with his egoism, as still happens to those who are having his experience. He would shrink back when words seemed to be ready, or gather courage only when his opportunity was gone. And then for days, or weeks, his world would be clouded with penitence for his disobedience. For it was not to speak so much as to obey which was required of him. At length, however, he did speak; and peace came to him, although there was now an additional trial. His acquaintances would come to Meeting hoping he might speak and expecting, from a man of his mental calibre, a striking discourse instead of some brief and simple sentences, and sometimes fear of human judgment kept him silent.

His father tried to solve the economic problem by offering to employ him as his estate agent, but Story declared that he could not agree to this, for his growing desire was to devote all his time to Quaker evangelization. He appears, however, to have settled in London and to have found a good amount of legal or semi-legal business which he could discharge without scruple, though at first he was short of money and had to sell his mare for seven pounds. His journal at this period contains another of his vivid glimpses of contemporary thought and speech. He was challenged by a man (afterwards found to be a Scottish doctor), who reproached Story because Friends had fallen out with so able a man as George Keith, a notorious 'apostate' from the Society. We are to imagine Story replying in the course of the argument, 'This is like Satan disputing about the body of Moses . . . I do not intend to enter into a disquisition concerning bodies

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material or immaterial; glorified, or not glorified; circumspective, or not so'.

Style was style in those days.

In 1696 he visited Scotland for the second time, but his reception was often as uncompromising as before. In Edinburgh 'one big-bodied stern man, having a great broad sword with a basket hilt, looked furiously on us and said, 'Awa', the Quakers should all be shot,"' while a Glasgow minister declared in a sermon that he would 'rather converse with the muckle devil' than talk with them.

Two years later Story visited Ireland, and shortly afterwards he felt called to travel to America and take his part in helping the large numbers of Friends already there to consolidate their position. He remained in America for many years and, although he does not record it in his journal, married Ann Shippen, who died after five or six years in about 1712. He found employment in Pennsylvania as a legal officer, concerned chiefly with conveyancing.

It must be admitted that often, in reading the later portions of Story's journal, we seem to have left behind the young man who wrote *A Song of Praise to the Saints in Zion*. The majority of those early apostles give, from time to time, an impression of self-confidence which is slightly offensive to us, 'light half-believers of our casual creeds'. Human opinion was not chastened then by the widespread dissemination of a superficial knowledge. If vehemently enough expressed, it could trample down just as much as it liked, and Story did trample, although we may sometimes wonder if his obvious pleasure in writing good, bold, colloquial English has heightened his colours and deepened his shadows. Some of his most vehement

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phrases take us back to the tone of Elizabethan pamphlets.

‘Their champion, being in a rage, spluttered out a mouthful or two of Greek.’

‘All in haste, a little hot man broke in as at a broadside, with his notions about predestination.’

‘One pettish Justice, of an old envious sort, a friend of sin, with an air of rancour said, “No” ’ (after being asked if he were satisfied).

‘My adversary, being thus at length on the ground, and utterly gravelled . . . like a door on the hinges, shifted to and again, without proceeding forward one jot.’

‘This made the old persecutor mad with rage for a time, and he began to rub up his old rusty tools of persecution . . . We went out, leaving him foaming and silent in his chair.’

Such passages suggest the days of Martin Marprelate rather than the birth of England’s Augustan epoch, and once more one speculates on the books which Story may have read in boyhood. At other times, the reporting of some small episode in his controversial travels extends its scope beyond merely reproducing phrases which we hail as pleasingly antique. He paints a whole scene in a sentence or two. After he had argued long with a woman described as ‘a very rigid and ignorant Presbyterian’, she ‘finding herself hedged round and her way blocked up on every hand, burst into a very great degree of weeping’. On another occasion Story relates that he rebuked an opponent with ‘a suitable asperity’.

‘“Thou advocate of Satan . . . thou minister of sin, be silent.” He went off with some mumbling invectives . . . and shaking his head and fist in reply

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to something I had said in the meeting against consubstantiation.'

A Presbyterian disputant happening to say that 'there was considerable space between earth and heaven', a Friend who was accompanying Story exclaimed in triumph, 'This is such a little Presbyterian purgatory as I never heard of before'. Such quotations, illustrating the theological courtesies of the time, could be multiplied from the fascinating pages of Story's journal; but the reader has to search for them through long stretches of sermon and debate and a labyrinth of texts. Such debates were known to last for seven hours at a stretch, and we sometimes hear a light-hearted remark that the seventeenth century discussed theology as we discuss football. But sometimes as one reads, light-hearted remarks seem entirely out of place, for out of those controversial pages emerges a kind of terror before our contemporary scene, a sense of the eternity remaining around and above the world's rejection of it. The acrimonious dialogues which Story reports did at least spring from recognition of a mystery. The whole temper of an epoch is summed up in a few words introducing one of his statements: 'I, suspecting that the justice spoke parrotically and did not understand the word *hypostatical* . . .'

There one has an epitome of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries—always remembering that the religious condition of the American colonists among whom Story was then living was inclined to look back, while an England now sharing again in European culture looked forward. It is very probable that the judge did not understand the word 'hypostatical', but the fact that he knew of its existence and could introduce it in such a way that an

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uncritical listener might have thought he did understand it, is yet another signpost pointing towards the gulf between the centuries. We, too, use jargon without being able to define our terms; but they are the terms of the brain and of industrialized humanity, and take no heed of the supernatural. 'Hypostatical' does at least remind man that he is not the whole of the universe and that the insoluble mystery is always there. The pity is that, in proportion to the size of the population, more people were then theology-conscious than are now football-conscious; and while many of them probably had as well a slight awareness of what may be called the general football element in life, many of us now have neither theology nor football to console us. And still the good life continues to demand a place for both.

Sometimes we indeed feel sympathy for the opponents of an evangelist who was as dogmatic as Story in his attacks on dogma and ceremonial. In America once, as one of those long debates was breaking up, an aged minister in the company who had been lying down in the background, weary after his own preaching, whispered, 'Pray, sir, cannot you pass quietly along, and let those things alone . . . the people have a belief therein . . . they are innocent things and do them no harm'. Unfortunately, it is our retention and disproportionate cult of some of those 'innocent things' which discredit organized religion in the eyes of many accustomed to an intellectual world of greater sincerity.

After his travels (he also visited the West Indies) and residence in America, Story returned to England in 1714, but almost immediately undertook a journey to preach in Holland. He also visited Ireland again,

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staying at one point with his brother, then Dean of Limerick, where he was unhappy both in the social atmosphere and in Meeting, since many came merely from inquisitiveness to stare at the Dean's Quaker brother. There is also a glimpse of the Oxford of 1715, where the strife of Whig and Tory led the students to attack the meeting-houses of Presbyterians and Baptists as well as of the Friends. Windows were smashed, doors wrenched off and burnt, seats were broken. The destruction lasted into the small hours, and next morning as Friends inspected the ruins of their premises with a crowd of both town and gown looking on, Story 'said pretty loud, so that they might all hear, "Can these be the effects of religion and learning?"'

The latter years of his long and active life were filled with perpetual travelling among his co-religionists. This intensive method of constantly visiting and exhorting certainly laid a strong foundation for those who came after and gave the Society a wonderful solidarity and sensibility. That aggressive note which in his earlier disputings often sounded to a degree which is unsympathetic to modern ears is changed for a strain of admonition and encouragement to groups and individuals growing up in the faith. The etiquette of religious controversy had changed. The earlier expressions of vehemence may seem out of keeping for one preaching a way of life founded on the belief that the universe is poised in infinity through nothing less than the action of suffering and creative love, which the spirit of man can be taught to transmit. But a little of Story's intolerance of certain opinions would be very useful to modern religious thought and would be a tonic to sensibility. During his long lifetime,

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which began in a Miltonic England and ended in the epoch of the *Essay on Man*, a new outlook was shaping in England and social habits of a new sort were strengthening their positions. Even twenty years before his death Story could hear the remark that there was very little poverty in his denomination. When he died, it was more than a century after the birth of Fox, the social mind was fast changing, and the realm of the spiritual in the individual outlook was shrinking. Quakerism had entered upon another epoch.

## AN AMERICAN SAINT

THE author of one of the most moving biographies of recent years took from Shelley a phrase to describe its hero, calling him

a nerve o'er which did creep  
The else-unfelt oppressions of this earth.

To anyone familiar with the life of John Woolman, the simple American tailor and schoolmaster who first attacked slavery, it must be evident that the words are equally true as a picture of the personality which is usually regarded as the most saintly which the Society of Friends has ever produced. There is, however, this difference. Both Shelley and the hero of the modern biography accepted the classical and not the Christian doctrine, and the highest level of that sympathetic imagination of another's suffering which was their ideal could not escape disappointment. Frustration was its destiny. But the pain which Woolman experienced in identifying himself with the enslaved and oppressed was regarded by him in the light of a fulfilment rather than of frustration. In the first place, it was part of the divine plan for the purifying of one individual soul and the accomplishment of a design unique among millions. In the second place, if the distress and the humiliations of that plan were rightly accepted, a more remote and mysterious goal to human suffering became evident. 'I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh.' Woolman was too humble ever to believe that he had reached that point; but it was because he accepted this mysterious participation as the apotheosis of human

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pain that he could suffer without feeling that he was baffled.

Modern Quakerism appoints committees, holds conferences, drafts minutes deploring the inequality of social conditions, and stresses the need for simpler standards of life. The burden of inherited and powerful capitalism is always there. The critic may be forgiven for the moments when he complains that if Quakerism is simply primitive Christianity (an opinion open to doubt), then the greatest obstacle which Quakerism has yet encountered is the Society of Friends. For to maintain a religious body organized on the principle of the priesthood of the laity is not going to be easy if its members are to be drawn from only the salaried and wage-earning ranks. To criticize exclusively, however, the economic phenomenon which is Quakerism viewed from one angle is rather wantonly ungracious. It is better to remember and to impress upon ourselves that that enormous shift of values and veiling of heaven which we call the Reformation did not invent industrial despotism. 'The capitalist spirit,' as Tawney has pointed out, 'was not . . . the offspring of Puritanism, but it found in certain aspects of later Puritanism a tonic which braced its energies and fortified its already vigorous temper.' Carping at those qualities in man and society which were strengthened as a result of the Reformation is not much help unless we keep in view those other qualities which were weakened.

When the critic within modern Quakerism looks wistfully back to the eighteenth century he believes that it was much easier for Woolman to approach slave-owners than it is for reformers to approach big business nowadays, but he is not altogether right.

Easier it certainly was, in that business and industrial organization was much simpler and collective bargaining was unknown. In another sense it was then much harder for a spiritually sensitive man to undertake such advances. The social mind was so much simpler that he went with naked soul. Nowadays souls are seldom reduced to nakedness. If a man failed to communicate his message in earlier days, he had no stock of formulæ and verbal compromises behind which to shelter. Sympathy or defeatism suggests to the modern critic who envies Woolman that the latter's methods could not now be employed because the web of modern social construction and a belief in progress has caught us all too tightly in its mesh. This is a mistake and a pretext for inaction. It was not because capitalism was young and weak, but because religion was strong that Woolman was enabled to achieve what he achieved. (It must be remembered that he inspired more reforms than he actually effected.) It is not because capitalism, in both crude and modified form, is so well organized that those who to-day rebel in the same spirit as Woolman against the world's inequalities find themselves so helpless, but because religion, in whose name they desire to act, is so weak. John Woolman was not hampered by the mass of popular exposition which modern religious thought, particularly of the Liberal Protestant type, finds necessary. He knew nothing of bright books full of a sentimental concentration on the Synoptic Gospels. He could have echoed Whittier, though perhaps with less impatience than one feels beating behind the poet's words.

Hush every lip, close every book,  
The strife of tongues forbear.

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Why forward reach or backward look  
For love that clasps like air?

We may not climb the heavenly steeps  
To bring the Lord Christ down . . .

But the spirit of contemporary religious thought not only climbs. It positively hikes. There is a familiarity of the spiritual life which is inwardly serious, and there is another familiarity which is not. The desire of Woolman's heart was a quality of life, not a state of knowledge. The consummation at which he aimed, as he would have told you in humility but without fear or extravagance, was communion with the divine nature; and in his ignorance of the Higher Criticism he was very fortunate. If we wish to be able to share in the smallest degree his power, we need nothing so much as to free ourselves from all the specious details of Modernist learning which believes it is making religion much easier by 'correcting "I believe" to "One does feel".' Contemporary religious life has believed too long that it cannot walk without these crutches.

'Get the journal of John Woolman by heart,' wrote Lamb, 'and love the early Quakers.' One wonders which early Quakers he had in mind, and whether he can have failed to see the differences between the companions and followers of Fox and the author of the book which he so much admired. Woolman was the product of a Society of Friends that was well established and consolidated. It was in 1720 that he was born in New Jersey. The community of English Friends settled there had come chiefly from Yorkshire and Gloucestershire, and the forebears of Woolman

belonged to Painswick. In order to be historically fair and to appreciate his spirituality in relation to its native environment, one has to imagine a Quakerism of the second and third generation, which was concerned rather with the intensive cultivation of its own inner resources in the endeavour to keep apart from the temptations of the world than with the reformation of the world. Apostolic zeal was not dead, but it had been considerably tamed, and Friends in authority found everywhere that they had enough to do if they watched over the conduct of their own members. By the end of the eighteenth century Quaker 'Elders' exercised over their fellow-members as rigid a censorship of dress, deportment, and recreation as was ever claimed by the most vigilant Kirk Session in Scotland. These domestic details have to be given in order to make clear the structural growth of a mystical experiment, and also to illustrate the type of religious discipline under which Woolman's soul developed.

There were, for example, the *Advices and Queries*. As these are the nearest approach to a liturgy which Friends possess, they deserve some explanation. They are, as the names suggest, a collection of exhortations on the right management of one's affairs both inward and outward, and a collection of questions, or groups of questions, in pondering which a whole Meeting can achieve a corporate examination of conscience. They certainly acted, as one Quaker historian has said, as a 'silent confessional' and had an incalculable effect in forming personality. Both *Advices and Queries* date from the end of the seventeenth century and were at first concerned chiefly with faithfulness to such testimonies as refusal to pay tithe, or with the refusal to conform to worldly customs. Gradually, they became

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a burden to the Society. Answers of a purely formal and stereotyped nature were periodically drawn up and forwarded by individual Meetings to their Monthly, Quarterly, and Yearly superiors. But very fortunately, however, no amount of flirtation with modern ways ever caused the rejection of so useful a guide and tie, and both *Advices and Queries* are still ordered to be read through once during each year in every Meeting.<sup>1</sup> A revision of ten years back by no means improved them, but the spiritual essence of them was able to defy the worst dangers of modernity.

The settling down of a new religious community into its second and third generations is sure to be a time of reaction against the inspired individualism of pioneers, a time of devotion to a constitution and the drawing up of rules. The foundations of a type of character are being laid. This is what was happening to Quakerism at the time when Woolman was born, and by the time of his death in 1772 a definite pattern of home life and of character had emerged, distinguished by caution which was sometimes assumed by the onlooker to be merely disingenuous, and successfulness in business to a point of which some modern Friends are rather unnecessarily ashamed, but, above all, distinguished by sensibility and awareness. Without any great multiplication of rules, without anything

<sup>1</sup> There are seventeen *Queries*, and one or two are usually considered one Sunday in each month. Some of them try to embrace too much, but examples may explain:

‘Do you “walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us?” Do you cherish a forgiving spirit? Are you careful of the reputation of others; and do you avoid and discourage tale-bearing and detraction?’

‘Are you honest and truthful in word and deed? Do you maintain strict integrity in your business transactions and in all your relations with others? And are you careful not to defraud the public revenue?’

but what might have seemed unskilled methods, the eighteenth-century Friend developed a control of the inner life on the accumulated merit of which the Society is still drawing for sustenance. Woolman's fellow-members were far wiser than the twentieth century, for they recognized that there can be no spiritual intensity and no advance without entirely subduing the natural man. Much modern religious thought would like to believe that the natural man can enjoy the fullest spiritual life, and is, in fact, the very person who ought to do so. It is afraid to wait during the dark interval before the natural self which has been relinquished is restored in a form more capable of enjoying.

The story of Woolman's life is very uneventful, but the quality of his spirit is strikingly evident in his writings. Of a man who writes thus we say vaguely, 'He is a poet', because we can see that for him

All things by immortal power,  
Near and far,  
Hiddenly  
To each other linkèd are.

Later opinion has sometimes represented him as an example almost of inspired illiteracy, but there is no ground for believing this. The conservative Quaker community in which he was brought up might have no use for art, but they believed in intelligent study of edifying writings. His own estimate is that he 'had schooling pretty well for a planter'.

As a boy he worked on his father's plantation, but at the age of twenty he obtained a post with a store-keeper and baker five miles from his home. According

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to his own story, he had hitherto indulged in 'youthful vanities and diversions' and struggled much with his conscience as he gradually tore himself away from pleasures which it did not fail to condemn. While working in the shop he was much alone in his free time, as his master returned to his home at night, and in his solitude his spirit became more and more sensitive to the invisible and the incomprehensible. From time to time he spoke a few words in Meeting, erred the first time in saying 'more than was required of him' and felt no peace of mind for weeks afterwards, until, in his own words, 'as I was thus humbled and disciplined under the Cross, my understanding became more strengthened to distinguish the language of the pure Spirit which inwardly moves upon the heart'.

It was soon after this that his employer wished to sell a slave, a negro woman, and directed his young clerk to write the bill of sale. 'The thing was sudden . . . through weakness I gave way, and wrote it, but at the executing it I was so afflicted in my mind that I said . . . I believed slave-keeping to be a practice inconsistent with the Christian Religion.' Entries in the journal show that he was advancing in comprehension of love as the life and uniting principle of the universe, and now he found the obligations of his work bringing him up against an evil which even religious persons then accepted as part of the structure of society. Before this incident he had written that 'to say we love God as unseen, and at the same time exercise cruelty toward the least creature moving by his life, or by life derived from Him, was a contradiction in itself'.

In 1743 Woolman decided to look for new work. His employer's business was falling off. He was

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anxious to find a calling in which he could preserve that simplicity of life to which he was already vowed. He disliked the thought of supporting himself by work that entailed too much 'outward care and cumber'. He chose tailoring, and in his account-book can still be read such homely details as 'To plating Pair of Bridle Reins for John Collins', 'Quilting a Petecoat for Mary Caighain', and 'To making a Little bonet for Amey Gill'.

In 1746, with another Friend, he set out on a preaching journey into Virginia. From one extreme, the poverty and hardship of recent settlers in 'the wilderness', the Friends passed to the sumptuous comfort of families owning many slaves, and distress over the condition of the latter hung heavy on Woolman. On returning he wrote *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes*, but this remained unpublished until 1754. After its publication he wrote a second part, which appeared in 1762. He went very thoroughly into the basic evils of slavery, for his whole attitude towards it anticipated the modern words used in those *Queries* which have already been mentioned: 'Do you seek to understand the causes of social evils, and to take your right share in the efforts to remove them?' 'To come at a right feeling of their condition,' wrote Woolman, 'requires humble serious thinking.' Carefully he traced the evil results spreading from generation to generation, and the gradual weakening in the slave-owner's mind of those very qualities of disinterestedness and humility which make men fit to hold authority. 'Selfishness being indulged, clouds the understanding.' He traces the deadly thing at its work throughout society and records conclusively that 'Luxury and oppression have the seeds of war and

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desolation in them'. And his perpetual injunction is 'consider yourselves present as spectators . . . meditate on . . . contemplate on their circumstance'; train your imagination, do not shrink from using it to transport yourself to intolerable conditions, for this is the only means of developing a social conscience.

Even a superficial reading of Woolman soon discovers his characteristic use of the words 'pure' and 'purity'. His final and unanswerable argument is that, when men and women are treated as slaves, 'the entrance into their hearts becomes, in a great measure, shut up against the gentle movings of uncreated purity'. Nor did he forget that to practise injustice does the soul more harm than to suffer it.

'There is a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath had different names: it is, however, pure, and proceeds from God. It is deep, and inward, confined to no forms of religion, nor excluded from any, where the heart stands in perfect sincerity. In whomsoever this takes root and grows, of what nation soever, they become brethren, in the best sense of the expression. Using ourselves to take ways which appear most easy to us, when inconsistent with that purity which is without beginning, we thereby set up a government of our own, and deny obedience to Him whose service is true liberty.'

In 1749 Woolman married a 'a well-inclined damsel named Sarah Ellis'. We do not know much of her, except that she was not very strong, but took her share in the business of Friends. Her husband would write in very tender if somewhat formal phraseology when absent on those long and toilsome journeys 'in the

ministry' which broke up Quaker home life for months at a stretch.

'I hear . . . thou hast been poorly. Thy not mentioning it in thy letters, I consider as intended kindness to me by forbearing to contribute to the increase of my exercise. I feel a most tender concern for thee . . . My care about thee and my child is much greater than any other care (as to the things of this life) but my comfort hath all along been that a greater than I is careful for you, to whose gracious protection I recommend you . . .

'Spare no cost to make thy life comfortable as may be. I say so because I heard by H. F. that thou wast disappointed about a young woman.'

For about ten years after his marriage Woolman led an extremely busy life. In addition to his tailoring he sold materials and trimmings, and his business increased until he felt obliged to desist from the retail side. In the usual Quaker phrase, he felt a stop in his mind. 'I believe Truth did not require me to engage in much cumbering affairs . . . things that served chiefly to please the vain mind in people, I was not easy to trade in; seldom did it, and whenever I did, I found it weaken me as a Christian.' He was also accustomed to act as a surveyor and conveyancer among his neighbours, but where such matter arose as drawing up a will by which slaves were disposed of, he quietly refused to undertake it. He also busied himself with keeping a nursery of apple trees, and may be imagined as sharing the emotion of an English Friend of the same century who admitted that he 'did not choose to despise the small glow of adoration which might sometimes steal over the mind on the sight of a fruit-bud'.

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His spirit was exercised, during these years, on occasions when war-taxes were demanded, which Friends could not consent to pay, and when various younger members of the Society enlisted in the local militia. But his concern for the slaves cost him most suffering. In company with other Friends he undertook a number of journeys 'in the ministry', once, for example, riding eleven hundred and fifty miles in about two months, sometimes sleeping in the damp and mosquito-infested woods, when he gazed at the stars and thought of Adam and Eve expelled from the garden. It was customary for Friends travelling thus to receive ample hospitality from their fellow-members, but Woolman felt that wherever slaves had been attending to his wants he must leave payment, sometimes handing money to his host, sometimes to the slaves themselves. This, as he frankly admits, was extremely embarrassing. Some Friends might show some concern for the kind treatment and slight education of their human property, but Woolman saw their participation in the trade as a hideous reproach to the Society and persevered in maintaining his unpopular, literal, absolutist opinion that the thing was sin. During long meetings 'for church affairs', lasting seven or eight hours, he had to keep his spirit in the condition of which he was thinking when he wrote, 'If selfish views or party spirit have any room in our minds we are unfit for the Lord's work'. He took a leading part in visiting those Friends who still kept slaves (purchasing slaves had already been made an offence for which the Society could disown members), and this was a duty much harder than would have been any remonstrating with those to whom he was bound by no tie or tradition. The difficulty and strain to a

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sensitive soul are evident in his journal, although he makes the visits an occasion for praying to be purified from self-love, not a pretext for complaint. To be regarded as a crank and a fanatic by Mr. Worldly Wiseman would have been superficial pain in comparison with having to meet the uncomprehending eyes of Friends whose prosperity had deadened their sensibilities. They were outwardly at one with him; had heard in childhood the same stories of the persecution of the early Friends, had read the same books and listened to the same Advices and Queries, and been used all their lives to the same silences in which a soul, if it yielded to love and contrition, might tremblingly aspire to losing itself in the universal Love. We never read, however, that Woolman thought of them with indignation or contempt. We need to imagine the discomfort which he, who did not wish to condemn any man, must have experienced in their luxurious, comfortable houses where he listened to the conventional arguments of men whose consciences were well padded with the obtuseness of the unimaginative. Woolman was never so oblivious of the life of the senses as to be unobservant. 'Some glances of real beauty,' he wrote, 'is (*sic*) perceivable in their faces, who dwell in true meekness. Some tincture of true harmony in the sound of that voice to which divine Love gives utterance.' Intercourse with the stolid and the unfeeling must have been particularly harassing to such a man. Nevertheless, he made himself go through with it for the sake of the negro slave, and declared that 'to attempt to do the Lord's work in our own will, and to speak of that which is the burthen of the word in a way easie to the natural part, does not reach the bottom of the disorder'.

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In 1760 he undertook a journey eastwards to New England, hoping to be able to commend a different point of view to Friends whose social position and weight in the Society heightened their responsibility. 'I do not repine at having so unpleasant a task assigned to me,' he wrote, 'but look with awfulness to Him who appoints to His servants their respective employments.' Where others might have repined, his spirit inclined the more to adoration.

His visit to New England bore no immediate fruit in anti-slavery action, but he was able to impress Friends with the necessity for protesting against those lotteries to which Church and State then gave their approval.

It was in the discussion of lotteries that he thought he had spoken too much 'in the heat of zeal' to an 'antient Friend', and later on in the meeting stood up and apologized—one of the incidents which renders him still more amiable to us, especially as he admits that to apologize meant some 'creaturely abasement'.

The journey left him weary and unwell. He wrote to his wife:

'I am not so hearty and healthy as I have been sometimes. . . . I remember thee and my child with endeared love and tenderness, knowing how much you miss me.

'I remember also that God is wise, He knows what is for the best. He is good and willing to make us happy, as we are capable of being. . . Trust Him, my dear, and I fear not thou'll do well.'

Spiritually also he was depressed. It had been a time of inward poverty, but he accepted this dryness and darkness as 'a dispensation of kindness'. 'In these humbling times I was made watchful and attentive

to the deep movings of the spirit of truth in my heart, and here some duties were opened to me which in times of fullness I believe I should have been in danger of omitting.'

In 1761 he fell ill. His scrupulous conscience found in illness a design for his purification and fastened upon certain of his habits as things which must be reformed. It was from this time that he adopted the wearing of undyed clothing and beaver hats in the fur's natural colour. (As this latter fashion was then prevalent among stylish persons, he was partly misunderstood.) He felt that the use of dyed garments was bound up essentially with insincerity and luxury, and his acute intelligence, sharpened by love, saw luxury as the indulgence of unbrotherly superiority, in short, the manifestation of the spirit of war. Like Englishmen of a later date, he abstained from sugar as being the product of slave labour, and he even confined his letters (he wrote a neat and clear hand) to tiny scraps of paper on account of the heavy loads and hard riding which he sadly observed to be the lot of post-boys. We may sometimes feel a sympathy with the Friend who wrote of him after his death, 'he appeared to us in some things singular, and the path he trod straiter than the liberty some of us have thought the truth gives', but we must join in her estimation of him as Christlike. And if we feel any temptation to air our superior tolerance when we read of him sitting in the tavern and begging the folk who were crowding to watch a juggler to consider the rightness of such amusements—a few more Woolmans throughout the Church might have prevented Hollywood from being created or, if it must be created, might have kept it in its proper place.

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It was not only the burden of the negro slave which Woolman carried on his own humble and loving spirit. He felt impelled to travel among the native Indians, whose simple lives had been so often corrupted by introduction to the white man's customs. Even the originally Quaker colony had begun to take the step of declaring war upon various tribes, so that Quaker members of the Pennsylvania legislature had been forced to resign. But it has always been the habit of Friends to set on foot some peaceful and ameliorative organization where a state of war prevails, and two associations had been promoted which aimed at approaching the Indians in a reconciling spirit. It was in 1763 that Woolman set out (although warned that one tribe was on the warpath), accompanied for part of the way by three Friends, but having one companion for the whole journey, not to mention Indian guides. The dangerous route led over river and mountain and through deep forest, and these were some of Woolman's thoughts, expressed in phrases of a positively Homeric flavour:

'Near our tent on the sides of large trees peeled for that purpose were various representations of men going to, and returning from the wars, and of some killed in battle, this being a path heretofore used by warriors. And as I walked about viewing those Indian histories, which were painted mostly in red but some with black, and thinking on the innumerable afflictions which the proud fierce spirit produceth in the world; thinking on the toyls and fatigues of warriors, travelling over mountains and deserts, thinking on their miseries and distresses when wounded far from home by their enemies, and of their bruises and great weariness in chasing one another

over the rocks and mountains, and of their restless unquiet state of mind who live in this spirit, and of the hatred which mutually grows up in the minds of the children of those nations engaged in war with each other; the desire to cherish the spirit of love and peace amongst these people arose very fresh in me.'

Travelling was exceedingly difficult, and reports of more Indians being seen in war array and natural forebodings of what it might mean to be their captive, were discouraging to a man conscious of fatigue and weakness, but his purpose was accomplished and various meetings were held with Indians. It was at one of these that the words historic among Friends were spoken: 'I love to feel where words come from.' The speaker was an Indian who had been conscious, above all barriers of language, of the inspired element in a prayer spoken by Woolman.

He returned home, journeying partly on an exceptionally rough forest track infested by rattlesnakes. As he looked back on the difficult experience, his reflection was, 'I was not only taught patience, but also made thankful to God who thus led me about and instructed me, that I might have a quick and lively feeling of the afflictions of my fellow-creatures, whose situation in life is difficult'.

His determination to forgo all those advantages which might prevent his entering into the fullest sympathy with the oppressed led him, on some successive journeys among Friends, to travel on foot. The heat was intense and he suffered greatly, but, as always, he aimed at a perfect resignation so that he might be identified with those whom he sought to help. And now he undertook an additional responsi-

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bility, for he became a schoolmaster. Although the question of educating the families of Quaker colonists was one which needed more attention than it had hitherto received, his school was not exclusively for those children. He drew up a Primer, and all this while still working as a tailor, cultivating his apple trees, and performing useful services whose multifarious nature can be judged from entries in his accounts.

		£	s.	d.
	To writing 2 small deeds. . . .	10	6	
	Aaron Smith.			
7. 1768.	To some twist . . . . .			
2. 1769.	Contra. By work at Mary's hat .	2	6	
	1770.			
26. 1.	By making a thing to stop chimney .		9	
	Samuel Gaunt.		6	
	1769.			
18. 8.	To 1 brass kettle for which it was agreed to pay forty pounds of cheese paid for.			

During the latter part of the seventeen-sixties it is clear that frail health prevented the extensive travelling of former years, but he had a concern to visit the West Indies and was inclined to accuse himself of shrinking from the hardships it would involve. There was the problem of deciding whether it would be right for him to travel on a ship engaged in the slave trade. Believing that the low price of the passage was due to the large profits made by the traders, he was prepared to pay more as a testimony against the evil. However, even when he had the opportunity of sailing on a Friend's ship, he did not feel satisfied that he was, after all, intended to take the journey. Finally he was convinced that true obedience meant abandoning the project. 'So I went home and still felt like a sojourner

with my family . . . and after a few weeks it pleased the Lord to visit me with a pleurisy.'

In this illness he came very near death, and he had a remarkable experience, the consummation of his fervent longings to feel the pain of others as his own.

'I was brought so near the gates of death, that I forgot my name. Being then desirous to know who I was, I saw a mass of matter of a dull gloomy colour between the South and the East, and was informed that this mass was human beings in as great misery as they could be, and live, and that I was mixed in with them, and henceforth I might not consider myself as a distinct or separate being. In this state I remained several hours. I then heard a soft melodious voice . . . I believed it was the voice of an angel who spake to the other angels. The words were *John Woolman is dead*. I soon remembered that I once was John Woolman, and being assured that I was alive in the body, I greatly wondered what that heavenly voice could mean.'

On the following morning, however, he suddenly understood that 'John Woolman is dead' meant no more than the death of his own will, the goal towards which his whole practice of self-abnegation had tended.

From the time of his recovery until he set out for England in May 1772, he quietly occupied himself at home, attending to his apple trees, superintending the building of a house for his daughter, and putting his outward affairs in order as became a Friend about to embark on a long voyage. 'Thus,' writes a modern biographer, 'departed from his native shores one whose meek spirit was greatly burdened with the weight of the whole social structure.' Even his taking passage on the *Mary and Elizabeth*, which was owned by a Friend,

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meant to Woolman a fresh exercise of spirit. He had observed that the cabin quarters were decorated with 'carved work and imagery' and 'some superfluity of workmanship', and he could not feel easy in paying extra passage money which was demanded on account of these luxuries. He accordingly decided to travel steerage, a decision which caused his friends some anxiety. A voyage of five or six weeks in the uncomfortable and unhealthy conditions of sea-life at that time seemed a heavy strain for one so sensitive and frail, and we can well understand that this readiness to undergo additional hardships must have been very disquieting to his friends. But Woolman was inexorable. The supposed amenities of the cabin were, to his clear vision, so many symbols of a spirit contrary to that pure love and pure wisdom which he was striving to obey. His imagination, refined by long self-discipline, could trace the progress of evil from the slightest indulgence in attractive 'superfluities' right up to oppression and love of domination.

'Doth pride lead to vanity? Doth vanity form imaginary wants? Do these wants prompt men to exert their power in requiring that of others which themselves would rather be excused from, were the same required of them? Do these proceedings beget hard thoughts? Do hard thoughts, when ripe, become malice? Does malice when ripe become revengeful and in the end inflict terrible pains on their fellow-creatures, and spread desolations in the world? . . . Remember then, O my soul! the quietude of those in whom Christ governs, and in all thy proceedings feel after it. Doth He condescend to bless thee with His presence? to move and influence to action? To dwell in thee, and walk with thee?

## *An American Saint*

Remember then thy station as a being sacred to God; accept of the strength freely offered thee, and take heed that no weakness in conforming to expensive, unwise, and hard-hearted customs gendering to discord and strife, be given way to.'

Such a journey as he was now undertaking was a common enough matter to eighteenth-century Friends. In the face of much regrettable modern talk about 'guidance', it is good to turn to the contemplation of men and women who did indeed claim to be divinely guided in the most trivial circumstances, but never vulgarized the phrase. For weeks, months, upwards of a year, they would leave home to travel in this entirely unpaid ministry, setting forth after long periods of cherishing in their hearts the 'concern' which they felt. 'I cannot form a concern,' Woolman himself wrote, 'but when a concern cometh I endeavour to be obedient.' Always they had to be prepared to relinquish the plan as Woolman had been forced to relinquish his West Indian journey. For it was not their plan. They were simply instruments for the divine will to employ how and where it pleased, and that will had to be learned by means of long waiting in an inward silence in seasons of acute desolation. It was an age of 'sensibility', and tears and emotionalism—a peculiar cadence of the voice, for example, in preaching—were common reactions. Nowadays, as the poet reminded us, we smooth our hair and put a record on the gramophone. Quaker emotionalism, however, was usually well restrained.

Woolman's exquisite scrupulosity over his accommodation on board ship may have gone beyond the average, but this matter of choosing a ship for a religious journey was sometimes referred to 'guidance',

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and Friends had been known to visit several ships and spend a short time in each, hoping to feel in one particular vessel an inward conviction that their place was there. Modern thought may smile or turn to some psychological formula to make all clear, but the histories of these mystically inclined travellers contain proof of psychic and telepathic powers which could reach a rare development in spirits in which the intellect was not allowed to be supreme.

He was now faced with several weeks of bad weather in unventilated and insanitary surroundings where appetite failed at the sight of food. Looking at the poultry which had been brought by the passengers, some of which had died or been swept overboard, he observed the birds' 'dull appearance at sea . . . and the pining sickness of some of them', and his unfailing compassion led him to wonder whether even this infinitesimal fraction of the world's sufferings might not be reduced, had men a mind to it. But there were other sufferers on board, for whom he felt able to do more. He watched the life of the crew, especially taking notice of those 'poor children', the boys recently apprenticed. Two of these happened to belong to Quaker homes, and for all of them he felt a fatherly tenderness. He observed their dangerous labour on rough nights, saw the cramped and comfortless steerage full of the wet clothes they threw off, and reflected that some part at least of the brutalizing atmosphere to which they were exposed must be due to man's selfishness and love of gain—for which there was only one sure remedy, the crucifying of self-will and the formation of a new inner life.

It was on 'Fifth-day the eighth of the sixth month' that Woolman at length reached London and hurried

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to Devonshire House in Bishopsgate, where London Yearly Meeting was in session. Unavoidably late, he entered upon a company of solid, prosperous, and conventional Friends, many of whom, in his opinion, had gone too far in conforming to 'worldly' habits. They were a comfortable crowd of English *bourgeoisie*, including notable bankers, brewers, chemists, and grocers, and they gave no great sympathy to this singular American Friend. He was physically unimpressive, and his extraordinary appearance in simple undyed clothing was such that one who was present recorded his fear that it 'might in some Meetings draw the attention of the youth and even cause a change of countenance in some.'<sup>1</sup> It was indeed hard for decorous English Quakerism to look deeper than the singularity of his appearance, but it was not long before the purity of his spirit was revealed. The Friend who had feared that young people might smile recorded in the same entry in his diary that Woolman's remarks on 'the benefit of true silence' were 'beautiful', and that he also spoke on the power of the divine love to cleanse what was human until it might experience 'union with the divine nature'. He had gone straight to the essentials of their faith, and ultimately most of his hearers were able to feel a unity with him which enabled them to look more sympathetically on his oddities. But this was not the frame of mind in which Yearly Meeting first received him. He produced the necessary certificate from Philadelphia, but after it had been read, one English Friend remarked that

<sup>1</sup> An American Friend, writing on Woolman, has just decided that the only extant portrait shows 'the asthenic, perhaps somewhat dysplastic, countenance of the schizophrenic'. As Macaulay said, a fine Greek compound is often an excellent substitute for a reason.

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possibly that much reception might suffice, and that Woolman might feel at liberty to return home without exercising any ministry in England. This rebuff must have wounded the stranger in Devonshire House very cruelly, but from the allusion in his journal one would gather nothing beyond the fact that his mind was 'contrite'. (One of the numerous lessons which eighteenth-century Friends can teach the modern mind is the need for contrition. Their journals abound in the word.) But his courage did not fail. He could not travel 'in the ministry' until English Friends endorsed his certificate, but he asked that until they felt free to do so, he might be provided with employment, as he had to support himself. A more kindly opinion began to be evident, and his travelling and preaching were authorized.

It was the north of England which he particularly felt called to visit, and he set out on foot. He felt unable to use stage coaches while the conditions imposed by a universal demand for speeding-up (in 1772) caused such hardships to men and beasts. In travelling on foot, also, he found wider opportunities for investigating the social condition of England and enquiring into the cost of living. He marked the dirty and unhealthy conditions of the towns, and felt a longing for more to be able to enjoy country life. For he was essentially a countryman, and admitted that 'the sight of innocent birds in the branches and sheep in the pastures' could mitigate any trouble in his mind. And here, as at home in New Jersey, he grieved to see how many Friends had abandoned the extreme simplicity of life which their ancestors had held to be the true way of living and had conformed to worldly standards of dress and furniture. The perfect answer

to all superficial arguments in favour of luxury trades is to be found in Woolman's writings. His direct and ingenuous vision discerned the fallacy of promoting employment by work which ministered to privilege and class hatred.

By the time he reached York in September he was very weary. At first he was entertained in the home of William Tuke, a Friend whose name is honoured for the part which he played in founding in his own city a mental hospital where methods far ahead of the senseless brutality of the eighteenth-century asylum were adopted with remarkable results. Woolman could not but be happy with such a man for his host, and with Esther Tuke for hostess, a woman whose gracious dignity led Friends to describe her as a 'princess'. But he did not feel strong enough to remain in their home in the centre of York, where the numerous engagements of their active business and social life meant a great stir and activity. He asked for a quieter lodging, and was accommodated at the home of Thomas Priestman, a Friend living on the outskirts of York near the site of a Benedictine Abbey. Here nothing but garden and orchard delighted the eye, but Woolman was not to experience such pleasures much longer. He was attacked by small-pox, that bugbear of the time, which he had always somewhat dreaded. His sister and one of his cousins had died of it, and he had given much attention to the need for precautions and isolation, although his thought was not so much in advance of his time as to look with favour on vaccination. His illness was not lengthy. At his own request Esther Tuke came to nurse him, and Friends saw to it that a minute account of his last days was preserved. They observed his tran-

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quillity and the detached manner in which he regarded his symptoms and discussed such treatment as the limited resources of the contemporary apothecary could supply. Esther Tuke herself admitted that the sight of a life so austere and self-denying was an incentive to Friends to examine themselves more closely with regard to 'superfluities'.

On an October morning he 'departed without a sigh, groan, or struggle', remote from his family and his friends. He was buried in the Friends' Burial Ground in York (strangely enough, a neighbouring church contains the grave of an ancestor of his wife, dated 1664), and his few simple possessions were carefully returned to his home.

Woolman's prose writings, apart from his journal, deserve to be more widely known, for they transcend the period in which they were written. They have a lucidity and directness, an originality (in the best sense of that word), and a sincerity, which owe nothing to eighteenth-century 'elegance'. Not endowed with the poetic creative energy of a Langland or a Shelley, he felt such intense sympathy with every form of existence that it enabled him to confront the wrong exactly as does a poet, with the simple words, 'This need not be'. Nor did he merely state this. He went farther, and analysed the egoism of inhumanity, and prescribed as a remedy training oneself to enter into the conditions of others. In his last illness he spoke some characteristic words: 'O Lord my God ! the amazing horrors of darkness were gathered about me, and covered me all over, and I saw no way to go forth; I felt the depth and extent of the misery of my fellow-creatures, separated from the divine harmony, and it was greater than I could bear'. In countless passages in his writ-

ings he reminds us that imaginative sympathy is always the necessary first step to getting rid of what is wrong; and we need to remember that although his own chief concern was for the slave, his method is the one which our more complicated and neurotic world should employ in dealing with the so-called 'failure' and the so-called 'criminal'. We have to feel our communal responsibility for the unemployed man who puts himself out of the world and for the man whom the law decides to reform by flogging, to get inside their universe and bear their burden before we can hope to cause any reform. The modern idealist complains with a regretful sigh that we do not live in the small world which the eighteenth century knew—and did not find so small. But those whom the modern idealist most admires cannot teach any other doctrine. What does Mr. Huxley declare, in *Ends and Means*, to be the first virtues if not 'love and awareness'? Modern religious teaching heavily emphasizes social reform as an integral part of Christianity, but remains too deeply engrossed in exegesis to do much for the naked soul; and it is the soul, not the brain, which dictates such an aspiration as that clothed in the words by which, perhaps, Woolman is best known—'to turn all the treasures we possess into the channel of universal love becomes the business of our lives'.

## A DIGRESSION ON WOMEN AND THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

IT is a commonplace, to those who can tell one denomination from another, that the Society of Friends recognizes full equality between men and women not only in the spiritual ministry but in its business meetings. It has no offices which are open to men only, although there are some to which one would hardly expect to see a woman appointed.<sup>1</sup> And indeed, on looking back into history, one would not expect an Elizabeth Fry to be produced in a religious society which either entirely subordinated women, or admitted them to office with the distressing self-consciousness on both sides which usually marks such episodes in the Free Churches. For a woman to be prominent in Friends' 'meetings for church affairs' need not mean that she is either a feminist or a busybody. She is merely showing a healthy sense of responsibility.

This equality did not exist from the early days of Quakerism in the form in which we know it to-day. It is, indeed, extremely surprising to discover how long it was before the present system came into being. From the beginning sex had had nothing to do with speaking in the ministry, and in the eighteenth century women no less than men undertook journeys in the ministry which meant months of spiritual travail and physical hardship. They were known to

<sup>1</sup> For example, no woman has ever been appointed Clerk to the Yearly Meeting; but one of the two Assistant Clerks is always a woman, and in May 1918 the holder of this office did act temporarily as Clerk to the Meeting, as the Clerk himself had to be absent at the trial of the three Friends (a woman and two men) who were sentenced to imprisonment for refusing to submit leaflets on the pacifist position to censorship.

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leave husbands a few months after marriage, or to rise up and forsake families of young children, including mere infants. Women had been among the martyrs in New England, and at home the seventeenth century provides the thrilling story of the journey of Mary Fisher, 'she that spoke to the Grand Turk' and had, in her girlhood, been whipped in Cambridge market-place for preaching a new and subversive faith.

Nevertheless, if it was to be two hundred years before London Yearly Meeting was to consist of men and women working together, women had been given every opportunity of managing subsidiary affairs which concerned themselves. There was not a rigid uniformity. In some places they joined with the men in transacting the business of that important executive unit, the Monthly Meeting; in other places they did not. But under either system they could acquire assurance in speaking and conducting business, so that they had nothing to learn when fully admitted to those meetings for church affairs in which Friends have shown, it must be admitted, some mastery of the technique of group-work.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the women began to agitate for a regular Yearly Meeting of their own. They were frequently encouraged by American Friends visiting London, for America had taken the initiative in this matter. That cautious, conservative temper which Quakerism manages to combine with instantaneous rebellion against certain threats to liberty kept the matter in suspense until 1784; and it was not until 1896 that women were truly recognized as 'a constituent part' of business meetings, nor did the separate existence of the women's Yearly Meeting come to an end until 1907.

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These facts are all of moment to the feminist, but they do not really assume or explain any peculiar characteristics in Quaker women. Equality in conducting business and sitting on committees seems to follow almost casually when once one has accepted the equality of man and woman in ministering spiritually to others.

The history of Quakerism in the first half of the eighteenth century does supply a portrait of one figure both picturesque and tragic, who is not always given her due as a pioneer woman preacher. In 1731 Thomas Story was visiting the Friends in Edinburgh, when his preaching attracted May Drummond, a fashionable young woman of good family. (Her brother was six times Lord Provost of Edinburgh, played a prominent part in founding the Royal Infirmary, and was a leader in the town-planning schemes which were eventually to bring the 'draughty parallelograms' of the New Town into being.) She scandalized most of her relations by joining the despised sect which had never been popular in Scotland, and a few years later she came south and remained in England for twenty-five years. She was obviously a woman of great intellectual ability, vehement and independent, and though she was ultimately to be disowned by the Society, her preaching gave Quakerism publicity enough. May Drummond was 'news', and the journals and gazettes constantly reported that she had 'preached to a polite auditory at a Public Inn' or 'come to town on Thursday Night from Oxford, having been the Admiration of the Counties where she made her Progress'. The elegant world, which would usually have scorned to enter some insignificant meeting-house, flocked to

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hear this remarkable young woman from 'North Britain', and her sermons must indeed have been remarkable. She travelled and preached in the west of England along with a Friend (William Cookworthy, the discoverer of china clay), who declares, writing in 1744, that he sees '*nothing* amiss' in her private character and she is 'one of a surprising genius, her apprehension being quick, lively, penetrating, and distinct to great nicety'. He does so far qualify his long panegyric as to complain that 'her style is rather too learned, and some of her epithets rather swell too much. There is something, too, in the management and tone of her voice, when she exerts it, a little theatrical. She resembles Milton in being too free with technical words.' Such complaints, considering her nationality and the tradition of pulpit style to which she had been accustomed, are no more than one would expect. And in social conversation she could hold her own. She was once asked in a lighter moment if the Spirit had never inspired thoughts of marriage, and retorted, 'No, but the flesh often has'.

But at a time when the average ideal education of a woman was no more than that sketched by Mrs. Malaprop, there must have been something in May Drummond which could appeal forcibly to any woman whose mind rebelled against circumstances. An anonymous woman poet hailed her in an address in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1735.

No more, O *Spain!* thy saint *Teresa* boast;  
There's one outshines her on the *British* coast,  
Whose soul, like hers, views one Almighty end,  
And to that centre all its motions tend.

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Too long, indeed, our sex has been deny'd,  
And ridiculed by man's malignant pride . . .  
Were there no more, yet you, bright maid, alone  
Might for a world of vanity atone,  
Redeem the coming age, and set us free  
From that false brand of Incapacity.

Cookworthy had remarked that she 'had a perfect acquaintance with the world, being what is called thorough well-bred', and from one 'polite auditory' after another she ascended to Court, visiting Queen Caroline and spending with her 'one hour, one quarter, and two minutes'. 'We had a very solemn time, and in no place I was ever in had I more freedom to declare the Eternal Truth.'

Nevertheless, all this activity in high places did very little for Quakerism. The crowds who enjoyed the novelty of a woman preaching enjoyed it and passed on. Her own eloquence was as fatal to her as eloquence is to most preachers, and one feels that the essential values and inner psychology of Quakerism were a closed book to this gifted convert. She had all the Scottish love of controversy, and seems, like Macaulay, to have 'breathed an atmosphere of argument'. One opponent declared that she considered herself to be a divine oracle, a statement which authentic Quakerism should never provoke, and she eventually fell into disrepute in the Society. When she returned to Edinburgh after her many years of absence, she found herself in a Meeting dominated by one of a family of hereditary patriarchs who, from father to son, exercised a Quaker dictatorship over their fellow-members. A born rebel, May Drummond did not endear herself to the William Miller then

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reigning by declaring, 'We must not attempt to make the Minutes of a Yearly Meeting Book the absolute Rule of either public or private conduct; they are at best external Helps, and must be our Practice only, when, in the wisdom of truth, we think them fit'. But it is sad to read the letter in which he tells her that they had far better meetings in her absence, and the whole picture of her later years suggests a pathetic failure of mind and nerve, the reaction to the prolonged emotional self-indulgence which is the life of the popular preacher. Towards the end of her life an unknown admirer wrote some verses *Upon seeing a Portrait of the once celebrated Mrs. Drummond, in the character of Winter*, lamenting the contrast between her youthful fame and the hapless neglect of her old age.

Ah, where is now the innumerable crowd  
That once with fond attention hung  
On every truth divine, that flowed  
Improved from thy persuasive tongue?

'Tis gone! It seeks a different road,  
Life's social joys to thee are o'er.  
Untrod the path to that abode  
Where hapless penury keeps the door.

Friends in both Edinburgh and London had ultimately repudiated her preaching, in which they judged there was no solid content and no genuine Quaker message. The ephemeral notoriety of the dramatic preacher had been hers, but it had passed, and she was left solitary, one of the proud and somewhat eccentric old maids of romantic Edinburgh in its day of culture and good sense, who preserved Jacobite

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sympathies and enjoyed all the rigours of the game. A frequently quoted description speaks of her as 'a tall handsome woman who, when she moved in the streets, wore a black velvet tippet over a cambric dress, buttoned from her chin to her feet, and never raised her eyes from the ground'. The spectacular element was never far away.

Her brief glory of worldly reputation contributed nothing to the progress of the Society which she had so enthusiastically joined. Her emotional histrionic temperament saw something fascinating in the promise of full play for individualism. But she can never have fully understood what lay behind the individualism of Friends, and although towards the end of her life she came more under the influence of the prevailing Quietism, it was not really congenial to her. When we consider the social outlook of the earlier part of the eighteenth century and its opinions on sex, we have to admit that her preaching must have been a landmark in the development of a communal feminine consciousness, and her place among remarkable Scots-women is sure. But the varied events of her dramatic life were excrescences to the true history of Quakerism.

It is not easy to choose a representative woman from the large number of those who were more truly typical Quakers than May Drummond, for various influences led to a certain standardization of type. There were numerous women, who travelled extensively to visit Friends' meetings and to preach to the world outside, and most of them left journals written in the conventional style of the time. Beyond the Bible, the works of the contemporary Quietist mystics of the Continent, Thomas à Kempis, and the records

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of the early days of Quakerism, the eighteenth-century Friend was not likely to read much. One short book, published in 1702, *The Grounds of a Holy Life*, by a Friend named Hugh Turford, had a very great influence on his co-religionists. But the prevailing influence came from Molinos and Fénelon and Madame Guyon, and that type of mystical thought prevailed which saw the death of self and the utter abnegation of reason as the one means to full communion with the deity whose name is so rarely used in these journals. 'Truth', 'Omnipotence', 'eternal Wisdom', are the familiar terms. 'The pure spirit of Truth', 'that Wisdom which is pure', 'the spring of pure love' were the phrases which John Woolman perpetually employed, and the one goal of life, to all these, was 'sensible union with the Divine purity'. Sarah Grubb could write of the spiritual sufferings which she endured in entering into the life of each group which she visited, that 'these unsearchable baptisms . . . demonstrate they are of the Holy Ghost and fire, because they leave an empty temple, a temple ready to be filled with the presence wherein there is life'. One type of modern religious thought, which prefers standing up and congratulating heaven on having created anything so fine as man, is inclined to find fault with the negative and withdrawn quality of Quietist mysticism. But there is no half-way house. So long as one clings to the reasoning self, one is avoiding real solitude, and without subscribing to the over-quoted and non-committal statement that 'religion is what a man does with his solitariness' one knows that without first admitting the claim of religion a man will not know what to do with his solitariness when he has it.

Modern Quaker thought, again, sometimes looks

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regretfully at its secluded and contemplative forefathers and laments their insistence on the depravity of man's fallen nature and his own utter inability to originate, from his own nature, anything of spiritual value. They are accused of a Calvinistic pessimism contrasting miserably with George Fox's limitless faith in the immanence of the Spirit in man. But Fox could not have achieved what he did achieve had he been merely a humanist, occasionally veiling behind a few mystical phrases his belief in the perfectibility of man. The seventeenth century gave every scope for splendid apocalyptic activity, but social progress helped to force the eighteenth century to introspection. Kings and Parliaments no longer gave outward embodiment to spiritual strivings. The whole of the battle-field shifted within and, mercifully for us who see exactly where the individualism that knows neither sacrament nor discipline has landed Europe, Fox's evangel underwent a long chastening. If some insist that Fox and Penn and Penington and many whose names are less famous were leaders of an epic spirit, others may reply that although we cannot all be poets, we can all learn to write better prose.

Unique among many autobiographic writings is the *Spiritual Diary* of Dr. John Rutty, a Dublin physician of the eighteenth century, a work which stands out among Quaker writings much as does the journal of Hurrell Froude in the annals of the Oxford Movement, since both are remorseless in their record of self-examination and the work of subduing nature and intellect to grace. Dr. Rutty was well read in devotional writings from all communions, and he alludes to Ken and Law; but his obvious and greatest debt was to those whom he calls 'Messieurs du Port Royal',

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and the whole method of his self-discipline is patently Catholic without in the slightest degree affecting his loyalty to Quakerism. He was not too proud to employ fasts and vigils, for although much of his fasting was obviously only a matter of diet, some of it just as obviously was not. There is no other Quaker document of the kind which gives so clear a portrait of the real man, for instead of the conventional phraseology which, with lesser characters, could quickly become trite, he employed a spirited and vigorous style in describing, as well as the state of Friends in Dublin, his own struggles with a quick temper, an excessive preoccupation with medical science, and a persistent inclination (if we must believe him) towards what he calls 'feasting beyond the holy bounds'. 'Horribly dogged and cholerick', 'brittle', 'snappish', 'mechanically morose', are the scarcely varying epithets with which he accuses himself. It would be hard to find among the long list of Quaker autobiographies a more human, graphic chronicle, or one with deeper pathos concealed in it; but the temptation to linger over it has to be resisted when one is searching for a typical woman of the eighteenth century. Indeed, reading it produces rebellion against the tradition that a woman's soul is to be content with rather vaporish ecstasies. There was nothing effeminate about Dr. Ratty, and the female mind has simply to admit a mastery for ever beyond its reach when it considers such extracts from the diary as these:

'A blessed time at meeting: God sent forth his light, and truth and love: beware of being an angel there and a devil at home. Quest. Hast thou quite put off that badge of old Adam, viz. Being a child of wrath ?

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Answ. No: else wrath without due cause would not appear. I am a mere dwarf at the age of fifty-seven.

‘Feasted beyond bounds.

‘God spoke in the cool of the day, and laid the sin of anger before me, which resolved itself into pride and hatred, a diabolical composition. Lord, spare neither hammer, sword, nor fire!

‘O what is the upshot of all my labour, natural and spiritual, but to minister help to bodily and mental diseases? Surely there is a better country.

‘At meeting, a good time; first, immediately, that to make expiation I must be as vigorous in meekness and temperance as I have been in the reverse thereof. Secondly, instrumentally, a sweet symphonick sound of another city, and of deliverance from captivity.

‘All hurry before meeting bad.’

There are few pictures of woman quite as false as that which presents her as essentially so sensitive and plastic and responsive that she cannot help being naturally religious. In the age of faith, she was allowed more dignity. She might have her struggles. But by the eighteenth century, if she knew what a struggle was, she might not reveal it; or at least, not in a crude and unsublimated form. Accordingly, there are many Quaker journals, contemporary with Rutty’s, which were written by women, but in a more vaguely standardized spiritual language whose limited vocabulary seems to suppress individuality too strongly for the result to be interesting reading. One of these was written by Sarah Grubb (*née* Tuke), who may be taken as a striking type of the character developed under Quietist doctrines.

Sarah Tuke first appears in history at the age of

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sixteen, in 1772, when her parents were caring for John Woolman in his last illness. She helped her mother to nurse the exile, and it is recorded that he said to her, 'My child, thou seems very kind to me, a poor creature; the Lord will reward thee for it'. The words of the dying man, held in such esteem by those around him, must have made a deep impression on a girl who is described as having had great natural abilities. She had lost her mother while still a very small child, but Esther Tuke, her father's second wife, was a fine woman whose spiritual energies drove her out into real active planning for the establishment in York of a much-needed school for Quaker girls.

It was acquaintance with Esther Tuke's step-daughters which inspired a young woman from the world outside Quakerism to exclaim, 'I never met with women of such enlarged capacities and bright abilities as among the youth of this Society, and with the highest degree of politeness'.

To the outward eye, Sarah Tuke's life was uneventful enough. As a young woman, she took part with her mother in religious journeys and visits to Friends in the north of England. In 1782 she married Robert Grubb, an Irish Friend, and the couple settled at York. Again she journeyed, this time to Scotland as well as the north of England, and also to Ireland. Visits to Wales and many parts of western and southern England followed. From 1787 her home was in Ireland, at her husband's native Clonmel, but before they had spent a year there, she once more felt called to travel, and this time far more extensively. Accompanied by her husband and three other Friends, she visited Holland, France, and Germany. On the whole, difficulties of language prevented this journey

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from being either very tranquil or obviously fruitful. (There was also a good deal of suspicion of women preachers.) On her return, Sarah Grubb wrote, 'My mind is settled in a comfortable belief that, through the creating and converting word of Omnipotence, the pure seed of Divine life was visited with greater efficacy than the discouragements which we were under allowed us to know at that time. But ah! poor Amsterdam! yea, poor Rotterdam! and many, many places on that side the Continent, touching whose inhabitants my soul, at times, sings mournfully to its well-beloved!'

She had written earlier in a passage which mentions all the essentials of the faith in which such an apparently hopeless journey was undertaken, 'Many of the inhabitants followed us through some towns, and gazed exceedingly at us; and some of them, as well as they were able, manifested a love which met that in us which drew us hither; but the strangeness of our language to each other was a continual discouragement; yet as it was not of our own bringing on, we endeavoured to keep quiet under it, and secretly desired that our minds might be so influenced, as to convey to them, in silence, that which is better than words'.

On the whole it was a very trying time, during which the small group were sadly conscious of spiritual isolation. They passed along the Rhine and observed the wild beauty of the Alps and the quieter charm of blossoming orchards.

'But our hearts were on the whole too sad to be captivated thereby; a seed attracted us in sympathy, which was not so visible, nor had carried with it these sensible delights, and for it, in part, we travailed in spirit.'

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This 'suffering with the seed' was a familiar phenomenon to Friends of the Quietist period. Briefly it meant, in visiting a Meeting, the power to 'centre down' (the accepted phrase) into silence until some perception of the state and condition and needs of the group or particular individuals enabled the visitor to suffer with and for others. In the emptiness of the passive soul God could speak. No human words were needed. The soul identified itself with the need of others present—Madame Guyon has given a full account of this interior process, which she called 'spiritual fecundity' or 'spiritual maternity'—and was used for their sakes. Their fearless acceptance of so great a concept alone would be enough to teach us that there are two sides to the oft-repeated statement that Quakerism was at its lowest ebb in the eighteenth century.

The Continent could not be said, at that time, to be literally without Quakerism. At Congénies, near Montpellier, and at Pymont in Germany, there existed small groups of persons (the French group owing its existence to the Camisard movement among the Huguenots in the Cevennes, which Stevenson described in *Travels with a Donkey*) who by some strange inspiration had come together to seek a religion of inward spirituality. They abjured war and violence, sought the higher way of reconciliation, where love was the dynamic, and altogether resembled the various mystical societies which had briefly flourished in Germany in the sixteenth century, memorials of the human spirit's periodic urge to create something conformable to the Sermon on the Mount.

The existence of the group in France was discovered in 1785, when a Cornish Friend, becoming involun-

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tarily possessed of prize money (he was part owner of two ships which went privateering in the War of Independence), decided to refund it to its French owners. By means of his advertisements, the group at Congénies learned of the existence of the Society in England, and the relationship, a product of unseen and outwardly disconnected movings at which we can but wonder, was at once established.

As for the group of 'Pietists' living in Germany round Pymont and Minden, Sarah Grubb, on her first journey abroad, came no nearer discovering it than meeting with two 'agreeable religious old men' in Basle, who entertained the travellers for three weeks. These belonged to a group of persons known to themselves as 'Inspirants', but often called 'Quakers' by their neighbours. They were, in comparison with their English visitors, wholly ignorant of what worshipping in silence could mean; but they were obviously inclining towards some form of spiritual group-life without external ordinances.

The actual group at Pymont was much nearer English Quakerism in its temper and organization. On her second visit to Germany, in 1790, Sarah Grubb and her companions felt, on arriving at the place, that 'there was a seed in these parts, which, however hidden from the world, and the many churches professing the Christian name, were pressing after an establishment on the right foundation'. The members of this group, about twenty in number, had been holding meetings in one another's houses for about two years, 'being uneasy with the dead formality' of many professing Christians. The English Friends felt at home at once in this oasis where silence was understood, and the strain and isolation which

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had hitherto darkened much of their journey were now made plain to them as part of the divine scheme. 'We are often very weary,' wrote Sarah Grubb, 'and the accommodations we meet with but indifferent, compared with those of England . . . and yet we have no cause to complain, having our consolation as well as toils; as it seldom happens that Zion's travellers are qualified to salute each other, even in a thorny, difficult way, but the immortal birth, in some degree, leaps for joy.'

Less than two months after her return to Ireland from a journey which left her exhausted in spirit and in body, but in 'peaceful poverty of spirit', Sarah Grubb died in the thirty-fifth year of her age. We can read the sober and solid testimonies to her worth which were officially drawn up by Friends of the districts in which she had lived in both England and Ireland. It is hard for us to catch sight of the real woman behind her own writings and the accounts written by others. And yet we know that this apparent repression of the merely personal and temperamental meant an enhancement of the self. No one could have met a woman to whom the spiritual universe was so real without being aware of some kind of radiance about her. Friends said of her that 'her conversation was innocently cheerful, which endeared her to the youth of both sexes', and while living in Ireland she established in her own home a small boarding-school for Quaker girls. From her remarks on this, it is clear that she loved the children; but a sense of the danger of confusing the religious sense in the young with undue affections kept her often withdrawn from them.

We cannot pretend nowadays truly to understand such suppression of self and such separation from the

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world—although in her perception of the spiritual nature of the universe she was far nearer to the unity of the world in its true sense than we, overweighted with political and social impedimenta, can pretend to be. But such self-abasement as Sarah Grubb sought was not dictated by any hard, rigid principle or a view of God as exclusively king and dreadful judge. She suppressed self because it was contrary to what she called ‘the gentle movements of the spiritual life’. ‘Gentle’ was a word very frequently used by other writers of her way of thinking. They looked for ‘the gentle operations of divine power’, touches and whispers too mysteriously intimate to be understood so long as the self was noisily active, demonstrations of a tenderness far stronger than the robustness of modern Protestantism.

Current opinion, however, rates an optimism of the wrong type as the first Christian virtue and complains of the pessimism of the eighteenth-century believer who called himself a poor pilgrim and might be said to creep tremblingly to Meeting, humbly longing there to ‘drink of the brook by the way’ and ‘taste the bread handed in secret’, so that he might be strengthened for his journey through a world of gloom and sin. Modern values (at least so far as Liberal Protestantism is concerned) call repentance pessimism and self-abasement an inferiority complex or an escape. It is unfashionable to go to any form of religious service with a primary desire to be made better, and all idea of going from any sense of duty is swallowed up in the conception of religion as ‘adventure’ or ‘romance’. Quakerism is uniquely subject to the modern thinker who calls Meeting a ‘power-house’. (Imagine the phrase applied to Mass by a Catholic!)

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In speaking of her own times, Sarah Grubb wrote, 'it is not an easy task to minister to this degenerate age, who think they know all things, and, like the magicians in Egypt, can account for all the works of the Divine hand'. Presumably, those who are deeply spiritual have always felt thus down the centuries. But never until the twentieth century has it been fashionable for religious thought to own itself beaten and be reduced to collecting and labelling as a faith odds and ends from history, psychology, and economics. We now do our best to placate the magicians in Egypt, and modern Quaker opinion, on the whole, tends to deprecate a world-outlook such as Sarah Grubb and her friends possessed. But this young woman, whose restricted emotions the modern mind would like to deplore, knew liberty where we are in chains, and the current religious diction which she employed, a rich medley of phrases from the prophets and certain mystical authors, must have been to her what art is to others. The prospect of visiting Friends' Meetings in districts where she had reason to fear indifference and conformity to the world inspired her to exclaim that her call was to 'go to the north of England and beat about the borders of the defenced cities, proclaiming war with the inhabitants thereof'. A woman of similar spiritual power, in another environment, might have made a poem out of that. But although she had been known to write religious verse (which was far less striking than many of her prose sentences), the poetry in Sarah Grubb remained unformulated. The whole pageant of England, let alone Europe, remained, for her, subsidiary to the welfare of souls. Darkness and light, in her universe, had nothing to do with politics or the beginnings of industrialism,

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for no social phenomenon could have meant for her what was meant by the sight of one human soul acknowledging that it depended on God.

We cannot to-day feed easily on such food as her journal and letters offer us, and the difficulty of adjusting ourselves to her standards arises as much from her strength as from what we are inclined to call her narrowness. We may feel impatient when she records, while travelling in France and Germany, that when she and her companions were obliged to dine in public in crowded inns, the men Friends 'bore testimony' by keeping on their hats and refusing to pay for any music which was played at meals. To us the austerity appears senseless, an unfitting background to the good work done by Quakerism of a later day. But if we persevere in reading this account of a life to which not only the clash of politics and the foundation of empires but the brightness and variety of the individual intelligence meant nothing, we find that the position is reversed. We come into a world of spiritual reality so intense that the modern eye cannot but be dazzled by the unearthly brightness. We can understand what Sarah Grubb means when she finds Meeting depressing and lifeless, but we are usually shy of facing the cause; and the modern mind trips over its accumulated furniture when she simply writes, 'Divine goodness was near', or 'Divine aid was eminently extended to us'. We have moved so far from that simple perception and that absence of self-consciousness. Instead of a spontaneous declaration of experience, there springs to our lips something that a theologian or a poet has said about the very thing which has come our way. There is a specious air of achievement about falling back on what a poet has said. Moved by the fact that someone

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is worshipping in the same building, one does not stop to realize for oneself. One finds it easier to quote:

O Christ, in this man's life—  
This stranger who is Thine—in all his strife,  
All his felicity, his good and ill,  
In the assaulted stronghold of his will,

I do confess Thee here,  
Alive within this life: I know Thee near  
Within this lonely conscience, closed away  
Within this brother's solitary day.

But Sarah Grubb, who would have been horrified by this intrusion of the mind, was herself both the poet and the reader. Nor was she a woman of limited intellectual power. While she was quite a young girl, the young woman whose words have already been quoted described her as having 'large natural abilities, a great flow of words when required from outward circumstances' and being 'of a moral and sentimental cast of mind such as we, who have a variety of objects to pursue—company, dress, etc.—can have no conception of'. That very starvation of the mental powers which we associate with her environment fed the spirit so well that it could absorb into itself the energies of the mind, transform them, and exhibit them finally in a spiritual intelligence of power. To speak of any epoch as having been a bad time for women is as absurd as it is to speak of there having been bad times for religion. Religion is always having a bad time, and there have always been women who not only survived but glorified their epoch. At the same time, the more outstanding type of woman in the eighteenth century

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did tend somewhat to the blue-stocking, and there were few who could have written some of the wise sentences in Sarah Grubb's journal, which excel by uniting form and content with an originality which her fellow diarists did not always show.

'Here simplicity and humility are our companions, and if a pure, holy zeal covers us, in a state of true dependence, the wisdom of the creature has no part; but the life rising into dominion, and being taken for our guide in every step under the exercise of the gift, we have no need to be anxious for doctrinal arguments to prove what we assert to the people; because this life, answering the life in those that hear, can expound and unfold such mysteries as have been hid for ages.'

'There is a beautiful order in the growth of the spiritual, as well as natural man: he is at first carried and fondled, and it is then generally right to give him what he cries for; in a little time he makes some efforts to go by himself, which, sooner or later, mostly prove effectual. Presuming now on his own ability, he assumes the airs and carriage of a man and in this confidence goes forward, till his stumblings, his falls, and his wounds, have sufficiently convinced him that he is but a child, and that his will is no more to be depended upon than his strength.'

'Self is a subtle enemy, insinuating itself into the company of the purest intentions and approved services, claiming a share of their peace, and of the spoil of the most righteous victories over every enemy but itself.'

'Human nature is so subject to deception that it can frustrate, by some pollution or other, almost every dispensation but death.'

'Self is apt to feed upon the manifest unity of our

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friends, and to draw our attention from the pure and strengthening virtue which supplieth every joint of the mystical body; rendering us less capable than we otherwise should be, of eating that bread which the world knows not of.'

Such sentences, unencumbered by any of the conventional 'elegance' which we associate with their century, owe their simplicity and their profundity to the fact that they sprang from more than reason. Sarah Grubb was no philosopher, according to reason, but she had the understanding of faith; and it may be better to be, intellectually, a little unsure of what one means than to be quite sure of it, when all that one means is some striking piece of 'modern thought'. It might be better for the religious thought of to-day to regard the Gospels more as the story of the eternal Word incarnate, which none of us can prove or understand, and less as the historical life of an inspired psycho-analyst, whose miracles we can all understand, if we want to.

## A NEIGHBOUR OF WORDSWORTH

IN the journal of a tour in Scotland, belonging to the end of the eighteenth century, occurs this passage:

‘Passed a female who was reaping alone; she sung in Erse as she bended over her sickle: the sweetest human voice I ever heard: her strains were tenderly melancholy, and felt delicious, long after they were heard no more.’

‘Oh, yes,’ says the reader, gratified by recognizing the incident, ‘here we have the origin of Wordsworth’s Highland reaper.’

The music in my heart I bore  
Long after it was heard no more.

Astonishingly apt poetical touch, isn’t it ? ’

But the journal was not written by Wordsworth.

‘That doesn’t matter,’ says the confident reader. ‘Of course it was one of the ideas he used to absorb from Dorothy—remarkable woman, wasn’t she?’

But when that passage was written, Wordsworth was only fifteen and Dorothy was a child. The traveller who noticed the reaper near Loch Lomond was their neighbour. He was the owner of that spade which the poet celebrated in verses which deserve a better tribute than the somewhat flippant smile of regret with which the critic usually regards the opening line.

Spade ! with which Wilkinson hath tilled his lands,  
And shaped these pleasant walks by Emont’s side,  
Thou art a tool of honour in my hands;  
I press thee through the yielding soil with pride.

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Rare master has it been thy lot to know;  
Long hast thou served a man to reason true;  
Whose life combines the best of high and low,  
The labouring many and the resting few.

It was no common admiration which Wordsworth felt for this quiet agriculturalist neighbour. De Quincey commented on it:

‘For some reason that I could never fathom, he was a sort of pet with Wordsworth. Professor Wilson or myself were never honoured with one line, one allusion . . . many a person, of particular feebleness, has received that honour. Amongst these I may rank Thomas Wilkinson; not that I wish to speak contemptuously of him; he was a Quaker, of elegant habits, rustic simplicity, and with tastes, as Wordsworth affirms, “too pure to be refined”.’

Wilson himself described this neighbour as ‘an auld bachelor, but nae world-sick hermit, but an enlichtened labourer o’ love baith in the kitchen and flower garden o’ natur’.’ He even added to this names of other versifying Friends, declaring that ‘thae Quakers are, what ane micht scarcely opine frae first principles, a maist poetical Christian seck’.

Wordsworth’s own summing-up was that ‘Thomas Wilkinson was a Quaker by religious profession; by natural constitution of mind—or shall I venture to say, by God’s grace?—he was something better’. And Wordsworth summed up the excellence of the man’s character in a few pregnant words when he remarked that Wilkinson’s ‘admiration of genius in every department did him much honour’. That sentence gives us an impression of a spirit responsive to fine things and regarding them selflessly; a spirit achieving that

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quality of disinterestedness which Keats never ceased to praise. 'Disinterested' is sometimes used by Wilkinson himself in an appreciative sense, which leaves one wondering whether this forerunner of Mr. Huxley's 'non-attached' then enjoyed some peculiar vogue in the vocabulary of the more thoughtful. We should now see the relationship from Wilkinson's point of view. 'I had lately a young poet seeing me who sprung originally from the next village. . . . He is very sober, and very amiable, and writes in what he conceives to be the language of Nature in opposition to the finery of our present poetry. . . . His name is William Wordsworth.'

Wilkinson was born in 1751 at Yanwath, near Penrith, on his own ancestral property of forty acres, nor did he see the world beyond Yanwath till he was thirty-four, when he rode to the Yearly Meeting of Friends in London, his sisters watching him as long as he was in sight, and his mother weeping. His mother seems to have been easily agitated, especially when there was any question of her son taking a long journey, and from his own reference to her as kind but 'of no great capacity', we can understand a certain lack in the family atmosphere. This may explain his enjoyment of friendship with women older than himself, whose motherliness was enhanced by more vigorous personality.<sup>1</sup> Women predominated in his home life. He had sisters, one of whom kept house for him all his life, and at one time a niece for whom he felt much affection lived with the family. She married in 1820, and he recorded the tears which he shed while sitting withdrawn in a corner of the meeting-house at her wedding.

Indeed, what with his gardening and his rhyming,

<sup>1</sup> Letters hint at a shy and inarticulate wooing of the daughter of one of his older friends and at self-effacement, influenced by the mother's need of the girl.

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he might appear as an amiable bachelor of gentle, playful tastes, his pleasantries welcomed by his friends. 'I believe,' he wrote, 'I have a soul formed for society and capable of tasting the pleasant things of this life.' In gardening he did prove himself expert. Neighbours consulted him not only about their borders but about the very sites on which a country home might be built safely and yet picturesquely. He was on very friendly terms with the Earl of Lonsdale and helped him to plan the gardens at Lowther. In 1788 he wrote as follows of his own grounds, where he could be 'busy, dirty, and contented' :

'Prepare and preserve thy countenance in due seriousness while I relate the trials and vexations of garden-making . . . as I came through Keswick I observed a large nursery, I inspected and found some shrubs I liked. I got the Cedar of Lebanon, a very fine plant and the only one he had, two Cypresses, sacred to grief and disappointed love . . . behold ! they came just at the commencement of the severe frost ! and am in danger of losing 'em notwithstanding my utmost precaution. In short, I felt some of the Anxiety of Old Maids for sick Monkeys, Parrots and Lap-dogs, but this is not all. I had a remarkably fine globular Box-tree; I shifted it to the end of a walk, 'twas as much as six of us could carry, and has not some little fellow that wanted an Orr<sup>1</sup> come with a saw in the night and cut part of it down ! Didst thou ever see a fine Cock when some malicious Dog had snatched away half of his tail, then thou may imagine my poor Box-tree. However, I believe the little mischievous Fool, whoever he was, would exult full as much as I repine at his achievement.'

<sup>1</sup> The word in the original is not easily decipherable. ? Oar.

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Or in a more deliberately playful vein, he could fill a page of a letter with a description of 'two strangers . . . both young and handsome' who had lately joined his household.

'The Female seems rather of a timid turn, modest and gentle . . . and by her eyes I think she is one of great Delicacy. The Youth seems quite of a sprightly cast, his Sallies are sometimes so lively that excepting my Mother, we can none of us refrain [from] laughing . . . his Partner lately got wounded by Accident, and then was shown his Affection and Tenderness in an eminent Degree; he never quitted her side.'

After which, his correspondent was informed that he had been reading an account of a couple of turtle-doves.

Nevertheless, Wilkinson was not a Peter Pan amateur of gardens and books. He was a practical agriculturalist. 'Thou knows I am a husbandman, and wear yarn stockings, and can get my dinner under a hedge. . . . I am sometimes rather heavy-headed, coming from the fields and open air to the warm climate of a good fire—

Perhaps my sisters, smiling, hear me snore,  
While mighty Johnson tumbles on the floor.

Thou knows I don't snore much either.'

But while he ate his dinner under the hedge he observed his world with a receptive heart. Spending all his life in a district where a mountain, seen under every aspect, may be regarded as a friend, he could be gently amused when a young woman mistook Kidsty Pike for Saddleback. He knew the Lakes and Great Gable and Coniston Old Man as places of terrible beauty. We pause, indeed, for a moment when we read Wordsworth's account of the dog which guarded its master's body for months; but Wilkinson

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had a more intimate connection with this young man, Charles Gough, who was killed by falling down a precipice on Striding Edge. He was a Quaker who had been disowned by the Society for joining the Volunteers, and it was by the document relating to this that he was identified. Wilkinson also wrote some lines on the occurrence, and summed up the terrier's devotion in a few vivid phrases:

Then at his feet his weary head he laid,  
Moan'd in his sleep, and till the morning stay'd.  
Thus pass'd the night; and when the rosy dawn  
On Swirrel's rocks and Striden's horrors shone  
To his dead lord the faithful servant crept,  
Pull'd his damp robe, and wonder'd why he slept.

His days were full of country activities, pursued in a tranquil spirit which responded to the significance of things.

'The happiest season of the year with me is now commencing—I mean that in which I am at the plough, my horses pace soberly on before, the larks sing above my head, and the furrow falls at my side, and the face of nature to my own mind seems to wear a sweet and cheerful tranquillity—I should be happy, my friend, were it not that I have sometimes to chide myself with a slackness of duty—not much, indeed, to my fellow-creatures, but with a forgetfulness, a falling back from that zeal for the Kingdom with which I am sometimes favoured.'

'Noise and Numbers,' as he wrote elsewhere, 'are not necessary to human Happiness'; but his pastoral life was not a selfish life and his heart was always open to the wrongs of the world and the sufferings of other

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men. At one time he would find himself in Carlisle jail in company with some Friend who preached to the outcasts there. At another time he would be organizing a protest against the hardships to small-holders caused by the enclosure of Yanwath Moor, or against the enforcement of petty manorial rights. Or he might be found in Penrith market-place (and his was not the temperament to find such testimony easy), displaying a diagram of a slave-ship in order to bring home to his neighbours the vile conditions prevailing on board. He felt a very strong concern for the abolition of slavery, and it was in his house that Clarkson, who eventually had his own house near by, began his history of the slave trade. Wilkinson collected hundreds of signatures for a petition—no light task in that remote countryside—and when he visited London, his sensibility saw a ghastly contrast to its splendour in ‘the almost naked and miserable negro, prostrate at many a corner’. In 1789 he wrote his longest poem, *An Appeal to England on behalf of the abused Africans*, in the introduction to which he hopes that his denunciations may not be thought too severe. He could find no words too strong to express his hatred of slavery. War might be abhorred, but before the more deliberate evils of slavery, he declared, ‘the transient inhumanity of enraged and victorious armies vanishes’.

His couplets are not, perhaps, ambitious, but it is clear that he had read his Pope, and his intense sincerity lends weight to his plea for that quality which Woolman before him had seen to be the prime necessity—the ability to enter, by imagination, into the sufferings of another. At first he expresses himself so simply that one might fail to see exactly how great an effort of sympathy he was demanding.

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Suppose thyself on Dover's chalky shore,  
Thy friends, and all that's dear behind; before,  
The rolling ocean opening to thy view,  
Vessels from far, with men of different hue,  
Hard-hearted, whom thou canst not understand . . .

But as the poem proceeds (after a passage expressing his hope that the passion for freedom may spread from France to other countries and even finally 'bid the Russian rise, with "I'm a man" '), indignation lends eloquence to his economic couplets.

Now ruminate, compare, and see thou prove  
Unfelt by him the tender pangs of love:  
Next clearly show within the negro's heart  
His country and relations have no part;  
And next, while drops of blood his shoulders stain,  
And gape his wounds, the negro feels not pain:  
Then show, of all whom breath and being warm,  
In loss of life the negro feels no harm.

In milder ways he felt the pressure of history. In 1804 a general rate for the purpose of supporting the army was levied on farms. Wilkinson could not pay this, and his carts were seized and sold. He visited the man who had laid the distraint. 'He expected a burst of reproach. I felt no such disposition. I said I wanted to talk with him about the late affair, and asked how he felt in his own mind. He said, "Very uneasy," and heartily wished he had never meddled. . . . He has suffered ten times as much in mind as I have.'

Non-resistance was not then the complicated question which it is in the twentieth century.

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Wilkinson's was not a narrow life, despite the comparative seclusion from the world which still marked Quakerism. He was fortunate in living so near the haunts of a literary coterie, but it was through his friendship with Lord Lonsdale that he met, at various times, Prince Leopold, Southey, Scott, and Lockhart. Canning once visited him in passing, and was guided to the best ford on the river, and on a visit to London Wilkinson breakfasted with Burke himself. One of his most interesting connections, about which, unfortunately, little material seems available, was a sad one, inasmuch as it brought him into close touch with unfulfilled renown. In 1795 there came to stay with him a hypersensitive and nervous boy of twenty, on the eve of producing his first book of poetry—Charles Lloyd, the son of an eminent and scholarly Quaker banker in Birmingham. Both Coleridge and Lamb had the highest opinion of Lloyd's powers, and it seems certain that his was one of the rarest intellects ever produced within the Quaker world; but it remained tragically an intellect *manqué*, for melancholia and mental instability clouded his life, although he produced novels and poems marked by an excess of rather Rousseau-ish feeling. Wilkinson summed up Lloyd in the words, 'The young man is of a very feeling heart', adding that 'his soul is harrowed up by the distress incident to large towns', and it is regrettable that we do not know what impression the older man made on his young guest.

Wilkinson played a dutiful but scarcely prominent part in the Quaker life of his district. To a Friend engaged in cultivating his own land, even attendance at Monthly or Quarterly Meeting had sometimes to give way to the requirements of harvest and weather. Nor

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was he temperamentally an evangelist. His faith increased his sensitiveness to all the messages of existence, whether conveyed through nature or through humanity, but he was very reticent over these mysteries. He occasionally, in his letters, expresses a humble hope that his failings are not 'criminal', and fears that he often returns from Meeting no better than when he went. He employs none of the conventional phrases of Evangelical religion. Indeed, his gentle dogmatism finds sufficient expression in such remarks as 'There is something beyond ourselves, there is a Power of Love which acts upon our spirits'. Again, he summed up a good part of the tradition in which he was brought up by writing, 'We may labour and labour, and produce confusion, but touched by the Divine Finger we become still, and then all is Light around us'. He shook his head over some who had abandoned Quakerism. They were, to his mind, 'only strong in individual self-sufficiency which does not unite closely with anything'. It was of these that he was thinking when he wrote a sentence which reads curiously like the modern indictment of the noblest Victorian agnosticism. 'Some of these,' Wilkinson declared in a moment of unusual self-revelation, 'talk of and admire genuine Christianity, that is, the Benevolence and Morality of Christianity without the Cross, which seems to me but a broken-legged Christianity.' His own actions were moved by compassion. A Friend who rode with him into Scotland related that he would dismount in a wild blizzard if he heard the feeble cry of a strayed lamb, and make every endeavour to restore it to its mother. Attacked one night as he was riding home, he had a remarkable escape, and on learning that his assailants had been thrown into

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prison on other charges and were suffering from hard conditions, he helped to pay for additional food for them. He once walked to London—three hundred miles in eight days—to attend Yearly Meeting because, like Woolman, he could not bear to travel by coach under conditions which caused needless suffering (even then the public cried out for speed records) to man and beast.

It was in 1787 that Wilkinson undertook his one extensive piece of Quaker service, making the journey to Scotland which furnished the historic episode of the Highland girl in his journal. 'I journalized,' he wrote, 'in the hurry of Inns, in Boats, on my knee, on the Tops of Mountains, etc.' His two companions were older men—John Pemberton, an American, and another usually referred to as 'aged David Ducat'. The concern to travel and preach was theirs, while their younger friend saw to the arrangements for holding meetings and often experienced rebuffs and discomfiture. He deeply admired John Pemberton, of whom he wrote, after his death, that he was completely 'disinterested', and 'even appeared to be got past that refined selfishness, that seeks the love of the virtuous and the pleasure of performing virtuous actions'—from which we can see what shrewdness underlay his gentle diffidence. John Pemberton suffered much in spirit on the journey, sometimes feeling a call to return twice to some one place after leaving it. On the whole, the reception given them was more respectful than that which earlier Quaker travellers in Scotland had known, and those who are interested in Scotland's racial compound will notice that the Highlander proved the more silent and courteous listener, while the inhabitants of the east and

north-east coast were remarkable for their churlish ferocity.

It was in August that the three Friends set out, and the late summer of the North was far from being over. Wilkinson, an epicure of mountains and weather effects, must have gloried in form and colour in the scenery of Argyll and Kintyre. He loved to watch the 'erect, tall, athletic, yellow-haired, animated Highland reapers', and would enter a field and give them, so far as difficulties of languages permitted, instruction in different methods of 'foot-cock and great-cock with the rake'. He looked upon high mountains and longed to climb them. 'Pride, vanity, and ambition' might be wrong, 'but I have an ambition to trample on the heads of the highest mountain in Great Britain'. This he eventually did, scaling as well Ben Lomond and the Cobbler. On the latter climb he broke by nearly half an hour such records as he could hear of.

But climbing mountains was not the object of the journey, and in addition to the embarrassments already mentioned, Wilkinson was distressed by feeling the tribulations of his American companion, who lost sleep and appetite when circumstances were unusually trying. It was hard to find accommodation for holding meetings. Usually the strangers applied to a minister, schoolmaster, or magistrate. Sometimes Wilkinson had to make five or six calls upon magistrates who were more timid than hostile. At New Cumnock the elderly minister impatiently exclaimed, 'It will not do, it will not do; I have read your Barclay, and do not like him', adding remarks which Wilkinson felt it would be 'a violation of good manners' to insert. The allusion to Barclay, however, is historically interesting. Robert Barclay, a Scotsman from near Aberdeen,

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brought up as a Presbyterian, had turned Quaker in the time of Fox, after a temporary adherence to Catholicism, and his extremely learned and obscure *Apology* is still held to be the most definitely theological work ever produced by a Friend. Again, at Leuchars, in that queer kingdom, Fife, the schoolmaster shut his door in Wilkinson's face 'with looks of bitterness that I cannot easily forget'. Even in searching for a lodging, he came across one woman who said 'with some warmth' that she would have nothing to do with 'quakers, clergy or bishops', but she eventually changed her mind. Wilkinson, still a comparatively young man and ignorant of travel, was often unhappily self-conscious. Cairns and Druidic circles (there was one of these near Yanwath and he sorrowed over its destruction) afforded him moments of pleasure; but 'it was trying to the natural disposition . . . to go from door to door . . . and to sit down amidst broken timber and the ruins of a mouldering building, as spectacles to a wondering people'. While he arranged chairs on the green at Campbeltown, the young Englishman felt his position, under the eyes of onlookers who could not speak his language, to be 'awful'. He could not help admiring the 'easy courage' of John Pemberton, on whom rested the heavier responsibilities for preaching. And strange indeed the Quaker message must have seemed. It is true that when one of the two elder men preached, his discourse would approximate more to a sermon heavy with sheer doctrine than would the usual modern Quaker ministry. But it would be unfamiliar doctrine to ears accustomed to hearing of predestination and justification, this idea of the divine particle of light within the soul, by attention to which, and not by

intellectual assent to dogma, a man was to be saved. Nor was it merely the spoken words which were hard to understand. There were the long silences, which to those brought up in a system which never encouraged men to turn inwards in a silence of all flesh and wait upon divine leading, must have been a troublesome novelty. Wilkinson remarked sadly, but firmly, that some Scots were 'so tenacious of certain opinions and performances that it seemed quite destructive of Christian charity'.

This was the only journey of the kind which he ever undertook, for his nature was not adapted to public preaching, and it is for his untaught, intuitive, æsthetic appreciation of man and nature that he is remembered. Living in an age when mountains were an emotional hobby, he made his own contribution to the literature of British scenery, and his *Tours to the British Mountains*, written some considerable time before its publication in 1824, is one of the smaller classics of its kind. 'Mountains and their accompaniments,' he wrote, 'are amongst the finest specimens of the sublime. . . . *Mountains* are my flower-garden and my museum . . . the most conspicuous and imperishable monuments of the Creator's power that we behold.' He frankly admitted that climbing contained an element of terror which gave a fillip to the senses. 'One creeps to scenes of this kind,' he wrote of his experience on the edge of a precipice, 'with a sort of dreadful pleasure, hard to be described—with something of a fascination that would lead to one's ruin.' And as he pursued a solitary adventure on the Old Man of Conistoun, he could reflect that 'it was not amiss to have a little sprinkling of terror in the expedition'. We hear of him creeping into a cavity

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in a Scottish cairn and being thankful to creep out, balancing himself on a rocky stone at Brimham, and carefully measuring a petrification with the aid of his garters and handkerchief combined. But these moments in which he found in nature an outlet as thrilling as might have been found in drama or music were only incidental to the awe with which he regarded peaks and summits. He looked at streams which had 'continued their fearful fray, night and day, for several thousand years', and contrasted with that the half-hour of his own life spent at their side.

'Twill murmur on a thousand years,  
And flow as now it flows.

Of climbing Skiddaw he could say, 'I did enjoy it, but quietly; no enthusiastic eulogiums. Perhaps sublime, unalloyed enjoyment is a quiet thing'. The sight of Scaw Fell provoked the reflection that 'no doubt for many centuries after the creation, it would remain wrapped up in primeval solitude; perhaps it might remain unvisited even by birds and beasts for a thousand years. . . . I muse till there seems a loneliness and silence around me that gives me the idea of the world before it was peopled.' Nor did Wilkinson remain satisfied with an admiration of abstract omnipotence. He did not need Wordsworth to suggest to him the cry:

O mystery of man, from what a depth  
Proceed thy honours.

His accounts of travel contain episodes, some merely indicated in a sentence or two, which might have been

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expanded into a fresh volume of *Lyrical Ballads*. Light-hearted travellers ask their way at a cottage whose master is dying; a sensible grandmother tells children who ask about 'bogles' that last winter's frost killed them all; a woman with a lantern sees a young friend home through the blackness of night, accompanied by her little granddaughter with a pet lamb following. When Wilkinson pauses to elaborate an incident, the raw material for Wordsworth is still more obvious; but his own simple prose makes the thought of even Wordsworth's verse seem intrusive.

'It is now twenty years since my mother left this world: she liked riddle-bread, and baked it: I do not remember tasting of it since her day. On tasting it, a number of long-forgotten ideas crowded on my mind; her looks, the sound of her voice, and her care for me, all came into my thoughts. . . . I attempted to maintain the conversation, but often could hardly articulate.'

Another picture of human sadness seems to have slipped out of *The Prelude*, although it is obvious that Wilkinson, faced by intense pathos, could openly identify himself with it in a way impossible to Wordsworth, simply because the Christian world-outlook liberated as much as it restrained him. On the road he came upon a woman with several children. They were bound for Liverpool and New York, where they were to join her husband, and she was taking farewell of her brother.

'The sorrowing scene was too sacred for me to interfere. . . . I alighted from my horse and took her hand under my arm. She trembled and she wept and I did all I could to comfort her. I walked with her until her sorrows rather abated; but she was sad, for when

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I took my leave, she never lifted her eyes from the ground.'

For that passage, however, which reveals with unique clarity and intensity Wilkinson's reaction to an incident which most of us would call trivial, we have to return to his compact little world of Quaker friendships and family connections; to a letter which he wrote in 1799 to a Friend whose young niece had recently died.

'I certainly have as clear an idea of thy engaging Niece as of anyone I had not seen before, her serious but frank and amiable manners often return to my remembrance. . . . We love to relate the little amiable incidents of those that are gone, and tho' what I am going to mention would seem unimportant to many, yet I shall for some time remember it of Hannah Kendal. . . . I had been to see thee, and the First Day after was at Westminster Meeting, she came and shook hands with me and asked me freely to dine. I was at a loss, and she seeing my embarrassment, said frankly, "I am Mary Watson's niece." There was such a kindness and confidence in this short intercourse that I loved her from the moment.'

'What I am going to mention would seem unimportant to many'—but Wilkinson can turn it into the most moving of stories, so that Hannah Kendal still lives for us, we can respond to the serious sweetness of the dead girl and hear the kindness in her voice. We may find remarkable the sheer poetic power by which Wilkinson communicates to us the pleasure which he felt in this particular fragment of human intercourse; but we have to remember that the whole spiritual atmosphere in which his life was spent meant a discipline and semi-conscious sublimation of the emotions

and senses, and a realizing of the significance of ordinary events, which it is hard for our crowded lives to recapture. Quakerism in the eighteenth century, for all its sobriety, could partake of the quivering sensibility of the time, although it never encouraged 'enthusiasm', and the commonplaces of each day were looked upon as being potentially of tremendous significance. The divine might break through at any moment to the man or woman who lived in a state of preparation for it; and it was in such a spirit that Wilkinson had seen the young girl approaching him.

Had he attempted to express those feelings in verse, the result would probably have been much less moving. He could write of what was less spiritual in the sincere but conventional couplets which were all that a Quaker poet was expected to produce. His *Recollections of London* (1808) describe the company gathered at Yearly Meeting, and many names well known in the Society are briefly indicated. We read of 'humble Forster', and 'gentle Gurney', 'Cash that feels and makes the stranger feel', and 'the virtuous Tukes that like a bulwark stand'. He was grieved to see how many of the younger members of the Society had begun to deviate into the manners of the fashionable world, forgetting the 'simplicity of speech, behaviour, and apparel' which their forefathers had strenuously maintained. To Wilkinson the adoption of luxury and the conventional decorations of life meant an inevitable hardening of the heart and coarsening of perception:

Your looks betray you, and your altered dress  
An altered mind from Truth's plain way confess.

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My spirit's grieved within the house of prayer  
To meet from man the hard unfeeling stare,  
The cold indifferent apathy of mien  
Through which a callous heart's too plainly seen.  
Yet such an humble look would deign to wear  
Were monarchs present or were rulers near.

He missed that pure and simple mind which had made the few words 'I am Mary Watson's niece' literally sacramental. He knew that the primitive spirit of Quakerism could not be reconciled with any ambition to

Preside at public dinners,—there to pass  
For skilled in eating, or to push the glass,  
Or call at inns with consequential air,  
Upbraid the waiter, stigmatize the fare.

In another poem he had described the employments of the girls in the Friends' School at York, from whom any such worldly transformation seemed remote enough.

With eyes attentive, bending o'er the page,  
They gather wisdom for maturer age,  
Or trace, with hearts affectionate and kind,  
The lines of love to parents left behind;  
O'er fingers bends the linen, white as snow,  
That distant brothers may their kindness know;  
Or plant with steel, in purple, green, and white,  
The alphabet with every thread aright.

In one of his most frequently quoted poems he apologizes to the birds who nested in his garden for

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the annoyance caused to them by prying visitors who wished to eye their nests and nestlings, and we have a hint of whimsical regret for his solitary life.

I pity you greatly; 'twas very provoking  
That while you sang sweetly to strangers a-walking,  
They should rush on your privacy, little regarding  
Your slumbering babes, and not caring a farthing  
For your poor loving wives who required kind attention,  
A proceeding so rough is—unpleasant to mention! . . .

I once was a builder, nor have I forgot  
How I laboured, like you, in erecting my cot;  
I thought, peradventure, like you, as I wrought  
Of a house of my own, and it might cross my thought  
That a mate might sit by me and comfort my nest,  
And there, in due time, that my chirpers might rest. . . .

In a similar vein of pleasantry he described his ideal home in detail:

A fair little Mansion, defended with trees,  
Whence the Eye might the Plains reconnoitre with ease;  
Five warm lightsome rooms, to the taste of my Fair,  
The furniture speaking her judgment and care;  
Some fruitful Inclosures, some Flocks, and a Grove,  
And by me a River should wantonly rove . . .  
My Villa should stand some three miles from a town,  
In which I would mingle to rub off the Clown . . .  
A Nymph in my Interests and Pleasures should join,  
Her Sentiments seldom opposed to mine . . .  
And should you enquire how I'd like she should dress,

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Why ? genteel—but not fond of fantastical show,  
Her Eyes all the Diamonds that round her should  
glow. . . .

The title of another poem, *Composed in the Fields in a Thunderstorm, having a peculiar pleasure in Thunder*, recalls his delight in the dangerous aspect of mountaineering.

This solitary Quaker agriculturalist seems to have been quite at home among the classical chit-chat of contemporary light social verse, and could feelingly describe the 'pleasures of a Visit in distant Prospect' contrasted with the flatness of the actual occasion.

High at the Board of fair Futurity  
Where genial Friends with cordial smiles preside,  
He sits rejoicing in ideal glee,  
His lovely Delia blooming at his side!

But woe is me! the real journey made,  
Her Friends and Delia in her Mansion found,  
He that elate the fancy'd scene surveyed,  
Is now in Awe's uneasy Fetters bound.

In still lighter mood he could write a *Supplication to Sleep* and enumerate the torments of lying awake, flinging the bedclothes to the floor, where they swept his coat along with them, listening to the dancing and squeaking of the mice, the creakings and howlings of doors and chimneys.

He could unite the mock-heroic with a very deep compassion, as in the lines (more ambitious in structure than most of his verse) to the memory of a frog which he had wounded with his scythe.

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Ah me, thy Gallantry is o'er!—  
The Pool reflects thy sober Front no more,  
No more my Path-way wilt thou pass  
In awkward Hobbles through the Grass,  
No more thy serious visage rear  
And croak to all thy listening kindred near;  
No more from yonder Brink of mud  
Leap headlong in the (? stagnant) Flood,  
And there as much enjoy the Hour  
As Nymph and Swain in rosy-budding Bower;  
And shall I doubt but Nymph and Swain  
Among your talking train  
Hold converse oft as Fancy calls  
And on the Charms of Frogs the grateful topic falls,  
Thy forward eyes with ebon set,  
Thy golden Vestments dropt with jet,  
Thy Mouth that opens quite across thy Face  
Are gentle Symmetry in thy loquacious Race;  
These Charms no doubt as much enchant thy Fair,  
As much are worthy of thy care,  
As to the Females of another line  
Bright Eyes, a Form erect and Face divine.

The frog does not, perhaps, lend itself to the most sublime lyrical treatment, but when Wilkinson came to write of birds, his utterance changed at once, and his *Elegy on a Nest of Linnets* is probably the poem which Wordsworth is known to have commended. (Incidentally, its third line, 'My Bosom feels an humanizing Pain,' echoes 'A deep distress hath humanized my soul.') The full title is worth quoting, as its detailed simplicity seems to reveal to us the gentleness of a mind which despised no small thing, nor any 'humble cares and delicate fears': *An Elegy on a Nest of Linnets*

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*found by the Writer when removing some Bushes, and tho' he left what he thought a sufficient quantity about them, when he went again they were all dead.*

My Foot withdrew—but first the shrubs I laid  
In mimic Order of their Form before.  
Ah too sagacious Bird! the tainted shade!  
Thy little ones receive thy Flight no more.

And could my Hand empoison every Flower  
And work, sweet Birds! your sad catastrophe?  
Ah! sad to perish in your natal Bower—  
Too short a Being, there to cease to be . . .

How have I spoiled the Music of the Year! . . .

Nor was inspiration restricted to his garden and fields. He wrote a lengthy elegy on the death of Princess Charlotte, in which the conventional phraseology of the couplets could not stifle the solitary man's intense sympathy with joys and sorrows inherent in human relationships which he had never himself experienced. It may not be great poetry, but when we recall that Wilkinson's only schooling had been a minimum of lessons from an old village dame, and that he belonged to a religious community which looked askance at verse-making, we have to acknowledge that his inherent delicate sympathy was not defeated by the century-long tradition of the formal couplet.

He views by turns the objects of her care;  
He lifts the band that bound her waving hair;  
He lays the dear memorial to his face,  
Unseen, respectful as a first embrace.

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He treads his grounds: a shrub, a flower, a tree,  
That pleased his happy spouse he turns to see  
And feels a tender pang to see it grow  
When she that smiled on its green leaves lie low.

And such a phrase as

that pure spirit thou hast just resigned  
May come to thee on embassies of mind

proves that the traditional diction could not smother individuality.

Wilkinson had a long life, dying in 1836, but even in 1824 we hear of him touring in North Wales, and at the age of seventy-six he walked thirty miles to a Quarterly Meeting at Kendal. He eventually became blind, and the decay of old age clouded his mind for a number of years. We are told that he was tall and wiry, given to dressing in light drab with knee breeches and silver buckles on his shoes. In old age his white hair fell almost to his shoulders, and his face was 'benign and animated'. He was buried in the graveyard of the little meeting-house at Tirril, near Penrith, where he had most characteristically advocated that no extension of the building should be allowed to cause the cutting down of a fine tree, a 'burnished sycamore'.

## A FRIEND FROM FRANCE

‘**W**HY dost thou bend thy body so low when thou greetest thy friends?’ some blunt English or American Quaker once asked him. We are not told what he replied, but he is reported to have said on some other occasion, combining with dry humour a passionate touch of hyperbole that was most un-quakerly, ‘You may grind a Frenchman to powder, but his ashes will still be French’.

After he left his own country he used the English form of his name, and we know him as Stephen Grellet; but he was baptized Etienne de Grellet. He was born at Limoges in November 1773. His parents were rich aristocrats. His father owned porcelain factories, but he had, at one time, an appointment in the royal household and was on terms of friendship with Louis XVI. Stephen had the conventional religious upbringing of the time. The de Grellets were devout people and two of his father’s sisters were nuns. With his three brothers he went to the Oratorian college at Lyons, where rules were strict and supervision incessant. Stephen seems to have had his share of emotional adolescent piety, but at the same time he questioned authority. He wanted to reason out the matters which he was told to regard as mysteries. When the time came for confirmation, he looked for some miraculous change in his heart and was deeply disappointed to find no obvious improvement. By the time his education was finished, he was prepared, had history permitted, to seek for happiness in the pleasures of the world. But revolutions wait for no man, and at the age of eighteen Stephen said good-bye for the last time

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to his father (both parents were imprisoned, though they escaped with their lives, and their estates were seized) and fled with his brothers to Germany. Looking back on this perilous adventure, he was horrified to recall his own insensibility. Soldiers and citizens had threatened to hang him, while he 'coolly stood by, his hands in his pockets, being provided with three pairs of pistols'. The boy had envisaged taking his own life with the last ball, after disposing of numerous enemies; but things never came to such a pass, and the winter of 1791-2 was spent at Coblenz, where the forces led by the French princes prepared for their winter campaign in France. Stephen was restless, the priggishness of youth alternating with its despair. Roaming about alone, he would look with emotion at deserted hermitages on the banks of the Rhine and aspire to a hermit's life of solitude and purity. In the spring, however, the Royalist forces entered France and endured many hardships, and his spirits revived. Prestige and gallantry could entice as strongly as ever did solitude and purity. Stephen was in a reserve corps and found himself as dangerously in the thick of various engagements as a non-combatant could be, and when the Princes' army was forced to retreat, he and his brothers narrowly escaped being shot as prisoners.

Safe for the time in Amsterdam, the young men knew that it was useless to hope of communicating with their parents, and eventually Stephen and his elder brother Joseph sailed for Demerara, arriving in January 1793. They took with them introductions which found them employment, and remained there for two years. The life of the place was dissolute, but Stephen was not shocked by the neglect of religion,

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for he was passing through a sceptical phase and saw religion through the medium of Voltaire. If he caught no infection from the surrounding profligacy, he ascribed it to the power of sound reason and philosophy. One incitement, however, to strive to overcome human wrong and cruelty he did carry away from Demerara, for after witnessing there the treatment of slaves, he continued, for many years, to shiver on hearing even the harmless crack of a whip.

On looking back over his youth, Grellet considered that the manner of his leaving Demerara was another proof of the divine guidance which had to work out its plan for his life. There was a rumour of the arrival of a French fleet, bent on capturing the island, and the two young Frenchmen felt that they would be safer in New York. A ship was on the point of sailing, and they embarked. The fleet was already visible. A pause of a few hours would have enabled them to learn that the ships were not French but English; but Stephen and Joseph had sailed, and after a voyage filled with alarms of pirates, fire, and fog, they landed at New York and soon settled in Long Island, hoping eventually to hear the fate of their parents. Here they became acquainted (their father had advised them always to seek the company of their elders and social superiors) with a Colonel Corsa, a man of good position who had served in the British army. More important, for neither Stephen nor Joseph then knew any English, he had a daughter who could speak French.

One day, as they talked, allusion was made to William Penn. Stephen was interested to hear that the Colonel's daughter possessed some of his works. He had heard of the Quaker statesman and thought

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his writings might be useful in an age of revolution, so, borrowing the large volume, he set to work with a dictionary. Soon, however, finding that what he first read dealt with the soul more than with statecraft, he laid it aside, feeling perhaps as a modern stranger might feel who had looked for the intellectual entertainment of *The Waste Land* and been offered *Murder in the Cathedral*. He imagined that he had successfully banished from his life all consideration of the supernatural and the divine; and yet one night, as he walked alone in the fields, he had so strong and urgent a realization of eternity as a fact, that he seemed to hear a voice pronounce the word three times. Although not temperamentally mystical, he was intensely emotional. He was also very young. The confirmed disciple of Voltaire found himself praying as he had prayed in childhood, and he now discovered that those very writings of Penn which he had abandoned in disappointment were what he needed. Looking up practically every word in his dictionary, he managed to read *No Cross, No Crown*. 'The title alone reached to my heart,' he declared. It inspired him less to conscious prayer than to a cultivation of inward silence and to struggling to read the Bible in English. He did not have to remain long unsatisfied, for he shortly heard, at Colonel Corsa's, that two women Friends from England, who had undertaken one of those laborious journeys which were a commonplace in eighteenth-century Quakerism, would be present next day at the local Meeting. Thither Stephen went, accompanied by his brother, who found the lengthy silences extremely tiresome and frequently whispered to Stephen, 'Let us go'. But Stephen was on the point of discovering that what he had long sought for out-

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side himself was perpetually within. He was discerning, with terror and relief, the potentialities of his own spirit, and the shock of the discovery which he made in the silence was so great that he did not know what was said by any Friend who spoke. The words of the English visitors, Deborah Darby and Rebecca Young, would be impressive enough, but even had he possessed more knowledge of their language, he would have given them little attention, for he had escaped from time and place. After the meeting, the brothers dined with the Colonel in company with the two English women, and after the meal there occurred one of those periods of silent worship which united Friends travelling 'in the ministry' to the families by whom they were entertained at any moment. These 'opportunities', as they were called (Stephen Grellet's journal abounds in the word, applied to his contacts with sympathetic friends in all places, but its original and stricter use confined it to the homes of Friends visited by their itinerant co-religionists), were times of spiritual crisis.

'They were extraordinarily solemn occasions,' writes a modern authority. 'The hush was intense, for everybody believed that the message that was to follow was being there infused by the divine Spirit into the soul of the trembling, palpitating minister, who was plainly being prepared before their eyes. It was generally supposed, too, that this visitor who had been sent to their home was a prophet, could see into 'states', and could announce the will and purpose of the Lord for them. . . . This particular family was called to face its duty in the work of the Lord, or was summoned to a searching examination of its life.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rufus M. Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism*, Vol. I.

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The modern personality revolts from the emotional flavour of most eighteenth-century piety, and writhes under what we feel to be its jargon. We do not pause to wonder how the phraseology in which spiritual experience is dealt with to-day, embracing as it does such widely differing vocabularies as those of Leslie Weatherhead and Gerald Heard, might strike a detached observer. The combination of sentimentality and science might yet, in some spiritual revolution which we can hardly visualize, be exposed as an evasion of essentials. But so far, alas, we continue to take pride in our unlovely periphrases, and cherish as tools what are really impediments. The Quakerism which was suddenly revealed to Stephen Grellet as no form of doctrine, but a quality of life and an atmosphere wholly indefinable, was still rich in the phrases of Quietist mystical experience, but it did not use them with superficial glibness. Over all its daily and earthly traffic there hung the anticipation of possible glory, should the immanence of the divine be suddenly exposed in the words or deeds of man or woman. But when all allowance has been made for the 'sensitivity' of the eighteenth century, Quakerism remained free from the revivalist spirit and from hysteria, partly because the habit of silence disciplines emotion as much as it feeds it, partly because mystical tradition has almost invariably insisted that the most sublime experience is less than sublime if it does not release energy for practical action.

In the group gathered at the Colonel's house, Deborah Darby addressed particularly the two young Frenchmen. Stephen could scarcely follow her English, but he knew that she 'seemed to read the pages of his heart', and the discovery of spiritual values, for

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which he had unconsciously been seeking, confirmed him in the determination to explore Quakerism. His acquaintances attempted to discourage him; he was living with a Presbyterian family to whom mysticism would be theologically suspect. He knew what it was to take a circuitous route along unfrequented paths in the fields because he was ashamed to be seen going to Meeting, and he knew what it was to be more ashamed afterwards of having been ashamed. His brother, whose sympathy meant much in their exile, was at first indifferent but eventually understood and accompanied him.

Deborah Darby, meanwhile, returned to England. A year or two later, in one of these solemn 'opportunities' at Norwich, she met with Betsy Gurney, young, vital, suffering, and attractive, and declared to the girl that she would become 'a light to the blind; speech to the dumb; and feet to the lame'. This is worth pausing over because it illustrates an interweaving of three lives which led to great results. The English traveller had met and left behind her in America a young man whom she had inspired by her searching words, and long afterwards it was Stephen Grellet, visiting London and horrified by what he saw in Newgate, who turned to the girl from Norwich, now Elizabeth Fry, and asked her if she and her friends could not help the women in prison. And suppose that William Savery, a friend from America, had never visited Norwich while preaching in England and never been distressed to see how fashionable and worldly the members of that Meeting were; then Betsy, one of the smartest and most modish young Friends there, would never have been so much moved by his preaching as to break forth into weeping in that

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gloomy meeting-house where the young Gurneys had often wanted to 'take a broom and *bang* those old Quakers who look so triumphant and disagreeable'. The onlooker might complain that it was just a girl's adolescent emotionalism; but even the Gurneys, brought up in an intellectual freedom of which orthodox Quakerism could not approve, were accustomed to all those personal contacts and impressive utterances being treated as events of sacramental significance. There was for each life a plan and guidance, and no one knew how he might be used for another's sake. There was a subtle connection between events, an unheard melody, a growing design.

Stephen Grellet was young and impressionable, and, as converts do, he embraced his new-found principles with passion. Return to France was obviously impossible. His father was in prison. His mother and one of his brothers were in great want, and it was useless to hope for any funds from home. He had to find work. It was a trying moment for shaping one's life in accordance with any new scruples, but he gave up having his hair powdered and adopted the 'plain language', although it was hard to have to inflict upon his parents, in letters, the pronouns which they were associating with the revolutionaries. Later on we read of scruples as to food—like many others, he abstained from the products of slave labour, and for five years he also abstained from meat. But he had some very wise things to say on the need for elasticity in self-denial and the need for recognizing that purely temporary abstentions might be required. Joseph found work in New York, and the brothers had to part. Stephen settled down in Philadelphia and taught French, at first unwillingly enough. He did not

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actually come into membership in the Society until 1796, but from his first introduction to it he seems never to have wavered in loyalty. He had found his spiritual home and he dedicated himself to its service. He soon found himself tested in respect to one principle, that of loving his enemies, for the news from home was worse. Both parents were now in prison, and some who had enjoyed his father's friendship and benefited by his kindness were now actively hostile to him. Stephen did his best to pray for these, and writes, 'I felt the necessity of keeping a double watch, over my lips—not to talk of what was passing in France; and over my heart—not to entertain any thoughts but such as flowed from the Divine spirit of love'. More than once his parents were reprieved on the very eve of execution.

He learned much from solitude at this time and was the more prepared for his first missionary journey, which he took in 1797, preaching and distributing Testaments in New Jersey and some adjacent parts. Next year he undertook another journey in the same parts, but on hearing that yellow fever had, as in the previous year, broken out in Philadelphia, he felt that he must return. In fact, he was so deeply stirred that he felt physical pains suggestive of the fever, and believed that it would attack him. He returned to the silent and terror-stricken city and busied himself with nursing the sick and dying, until one night he felt so ill that he had to crawl downstairs and unlock his front door so that he might not be left to die alone. So near to death did he seem to be that his coffin was ordered, and his name, with the description 'a French Quaker', was added to the day's return of deaths. In his extreme weakness, he tells us, he seemed to be

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assured that he would live, because there was much work for him to do in many lands.

After his recovery he settled in New York and joined his brother in business, but mercantile affairs were to play a very small part in a life devoted to missionary journeys which were extraordinarily extensive. It is hard for us to free our minds sufficiently from the encumbrances of knowledge to realize a life thus canalized, in which every detail was subordinated to the desire to be an evangelist of the Gospel. Grellet travelled far and wide, passing through countries whose art was famous, but he remarks now and then that it was the people, not their land, which he had come to see. While in Italy he dwelt particularly on the regret which he felt at having to refrain from visiting Herculaneum and Pompeii. He had an active and lively intelligence and admitted that he could have been deeply interested in sight-seeing if more urgent tasks had not been his portion. He was keenly observant of detail and could give a brief summary of the appearance of a town in a sober but graphic style. Sometimes his scrupulous details combine with a glimpse of beauty, as when he wrote, in Cephalonia, 'A short distance from our vessel is a beautiful grotto. . . . I had to crouch down in the boat in passing into it; after getting in, we are under a fine spacious vault of solid rock . . . from whence hangs down in festoons a very delicate fern of a fine texture. The cave is one hundred and ten yards in length, sixty in diameter.' Again, in Holland he noted that the cattle were beautiful, 'of the species that appear as if they had a white sheet over their backs', and that the cleanliness of the farms was such that their wooden milk vessels were white and 'their kettles of brass like shin-

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ing gold'. In Bohemia he slipped so far into the language of the period (1832) as to call a road 'very romantic', describing the fantastic shapes of the rocks and stones. When travelling over the Russian steppes, he found time to relate, in a complete epitome of a wild country, that he had noticed a large wolf 'lying on the ground with an eagle, which had probably attacked him, by his side; his talons were nearly buried in his back; in the struggle both had died.' In a very different environment, he seems to have been much impressed by the loveliness of Mentone, lying under its snowy mountains. His summary of the place is thoroughly characteristic of the sedate and didactic pleasure with which he viewed foreign landscapes.

'The heat of the weather would be unbearable, were it not that the air is very pleasantly tempered by the ice and snow above. The orange trees are abundant in that valley; they grow to the size of our apple trees, and are planted like our orchards; they are continually blossoming and bearing fruit which is of the best quality.'

Grellet's was essentially a mission to the world outside the Society of Friends. He did not travel across continents in order to make converts to Quakerism, and the main theme of his preaching was justification by faith, which the Quakerism of Fox's day had tended to regard as subsidiary to the great doctrine of the immanence of the divine in humanity. Sometimes as one reads Grellet's account of his preaching, one is inclined to label his subject-matter as a Methodistic form of Quakerism, so great is his emphasis on the one central and static fact of Calvary and atonement. Conventional Protestant theology, with its atmosphere of bargaining and its nervous dread lest the super-

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natural should be found to be really near at hand, may sometimes appear to dominate his preaching. But none could have been more faithful in upholding the testimonies against war and oaths, and slavery and a 'hireling ministry'; and it is this last testimony, the insistence on the priesthood of the laity, after all, which differentiates Quaker mysticism from Catholic mysticism. So long as he stressed that, he was in no danger of compromising with the forerunners of modern Free Church theologians.

His journeys in America were almost insignificant in comparison with his journeys in Europe and Asia Minor, and naturally gave him more opportunity for speaking on behalf of the slave. Travelling was full of dangers. In thick forests their guide would plunge ahead into the gloom with a white handkerchief tied round his hat to catch their eyes. Flooded rivers had to be crossed, wolves and bears were heard in the distance, and snakes infested the immediate neighbourhood. Once Grellet and his companion found their horses poisoned by 'mischievous people'. In some places a horse could be carried across water only by putting his fore-feet in one canoe and his hind feet in another. Sometimes provisions ran out, and he knew what it was to eat squirrels, which a boy brought down with bow and arrows, or even to chew pieces of bark. Bodily sufferings, however, were not the heaviest burden of this journey in wild places, for he knew what it was to be sometimes plunged into a sea of darkness where faith seemed impossible and reason represented in a mocking light those truths for which he had believed he ought to speak. Previously he had sometimes been able to enter vicariously into the unbelief of others, but now their unbelief became a positive

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state of his own soul. He could only say, as George Fox had said, 'I cried to the Lord . . . and the Lord answered, that it was needful I should have a sense of all conditions: how else should I speak to all conditions?'

In 1802 Joseph Grellet decided to return to France, but Stephen was well established in New York by now, and in the following year he married.

It is not easy to remember while reading Grellet's staid and solemn pages that he was still a young man—only thirty-three—when he first left America to revisit his own country and proceed anywhere else where he might feel he was called to preach. The protracted adolescence of the modern mind feels that here it is reading the journal of an elderly man, for all is circumspect and right, restrained, subdued. He has not that intensity of imagination which makes Woolman's journal a poetic work.

It was in 1807 that he at last saw France again. His father was dead, and his mother had been so much distressed by his religious *volte-face* that she had had Masses said on his behalf and persuaded him, after his arrival, to come with her to her director. Stephen agreed to this, but the priest became highly indignant against, not the theology, but the various 'testimonies' of Quakerism. His anger was so bitter that mother and son left him. 'After we got out, my beloved mother lifted up her hands in astonishment at conduct so unbecoming the Christian professor.' Many attempts were made to bring him back to the Church, and deists and atheists engaged him in argument. But argument could do nothing with one who clearly regarded his Catholic fellow-countrymen exactly as did an eminent English Quaker of the present century, who is said to

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have referred to 'the ritualistic semi-heathen of the Latin countries'. Nevertheless, he was still a Frenchman, and the sufferings of his country lay very heavily on his heart. He longed to have an audience of Napoleon, but the current restrictions forbade his obtaining a passport to Paris, and as his work in France appeared to be at an end, he returned to America. Here his travels, never interrupted for long, lay more intensively among Friends, having the two-fold object of building up the Society and protesting against slavery. While on a journey in Ohio, he fell dangerously ill and had to be nursed in a simple log-cabin belonging to Friends who had recently settled in the wilds. It consisted of one large room, 'but this', he writes, with one of his unexpected touches of what Fox called 'unity with the creation', 'had another small log chamber joined to it; this they prepared for me, and it is to me like a little palace, though it is so open that I can count the stars as I lie in bed'.

Soon after this came an episode in which contemporary history strangely cut across that timeless spiritual world in which Grellet lived. He had moved temporarily out of New York, for the sake of his wife's health, and was living at Greenwich, and there Thomas Paine lay dying in great poverty, sometimes taunted by his deist friends, who feared a death-bed repentance of his rationalism. Grellet visited him, and his words and spirit must have reminded the dying man of the Quaker home in which he had been brought up in England. But when he sent a message asking his neighbour to return, Grellet had already left the place.

In 1811 he again sailed for Europe—still a man under forty, we have to remind ourselves, in view of

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the decidedly elderly tone of his journal. He was obviously a very bad sailor, and long voyages must have been peculiarly trying to such under the abominable conditions of the time. But like Woolman in similar circumstances, he looked round to see the plight of others and sorrowed over the rough young seamen whom he quaintly compared to 'the prancing horse in the wilderness'.

Now began once more the days of crowded riding and preaching; he would generally be at two meetings in a day, and often he did not know in the morning in what direction he ought to turn. He visited all parts of Britain and Ireland, and was touchingly reminded of his own country in his frequent opportunities of preaching to large numbers of French prisoners of war. His account of a crowded meeting at Birmingham, in which he spoke against war to an audience largely engaged in making armaments as busily as at the present moment, comes home tragically to the modern reader. It was also during this visit to England that he persuaded London Friends to hold a meeting at Westminster, where he preached to the prostitutes and thieves whose haunts lay near the meeting-house. Most memorable of all, he visited Newgate and saw its vileness—four condemned men, for example, herded together in a cell where wives and children came to see them for the last time, and women prisoners kept in conditions so incredibly horrible that Grellet at once went to the City home of Joseph Fry and soon found that 'the appeal to such a pious and sensible mind as dear Elizabeth possesses was not in vain'. She sent for flannel and collected young women Friends to make clothes for the naked children of Newgate. To wrestle in prayer for the souls of condemned felons, to

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spend hours in exhorting them to repentance and accompany them to the gallows, as the Methodists did, was right and commendable; but already there was a Quaker tradition of looking for something to be *done*, of being on the watch for a chance to suggest obvious practical reforms instead of being content to win a spectacular spiritual victory which might not do anything to change the lot of prisoners yet to come.

All this had taken him nearly two years to perform, and still he had not crossed the Channel. A biography of Grellet dating from 1862 speaks feelingly of the difficulty with which Victorian readers, enjoying peace and prosperity, would try to recapture the dangerous and alarming atmosphere which travellers on the Continent had to bear in 1813. A century and a quarter of progress has possibly made it much easier for us to-day to imagine ourselves transported to the conditions of Grellet's time.

'The freedom of friendly intercourse,' writes the historian of 1862, 'between the different States of Europe had long been interrupted; superstition and infidelity, vice and wickedness had spread to an alarming extent; religion was driven into seclusion, and with many Christianity had become little more than an empty name; international feuds and jealousies had rendered the system of police and passport regulations exceedingly annoying, and painfully restrictive to individual liberty.'

"That is the end of the first news." . . . But we have seen George Lansbury, like Grellet, face these difficulties for the sake of peace.

Grellet's interest in social reform seems to have increased from about this time, and for the rest of his life he never lost an opportunity of visiting prisons,

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workhouses, orphanages, and all institutions into which society packs its more unfortunate members. At length he was able to reach France, but he was most closely searched on arrival, although after delay he was this time allowed to go to Paris. There, however, he was strictly watched by officials, but he often made contact with individuals who wished to hear more of the way of life which dictated his unusual dress and speech. Always ready to distribute Bibles and literature, he found that some new tracts on Quakerism, which he had prepared, would have to pass a censorship. Pacifist principles were suspect. He was closely cross-examined but assured them he 'had nothing to do with politics'. The Commissary of Police confronted him with his *dossier*, giving all particulars of his departure from France as a boy and subsequent events. As Grellet dryly remarked, after prolonged questioning, they must have had 'quite a history' of his life so far.

One thing struck him particularly, his lack of any concern to visit Napoleon now that circumstances made it possible. On his former visit, he had really suffered over the apparent frustration, but now he felt no longing, and yet was at peace in his mind.

As was pointed out in connection with the travels of Sarah Grubb, France and Germany each had a small Quaker group of its own, and the visits of an inspiring preacher like Grellet must have been extraordinarily valuable.

It is impossible, in limited space, to give detailed accounts of journeys on so gigantic a scale. In this second visit to Europe he reckoned to have covered twenty-six thousand miles in France, Switzerland, and Germany, and achievements which, considering the

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means of locomotion, were still more remarkable lay ahead of him. His own account of his life is so exclusively preoccupied with spiritual processes that his contemporary allusions remind us of little but the horrors of years of war, and the universal need for better treatment of the so-called criminal, the insane, the orphaned, and the aged. We have to use our own imaginations to see in the general European background new works by Scott and Beethoven, the elegant stucco buildings rising in Regent Street, 'Gothick' fantasies being erected for amateurs of romance, the Chartists mustering in hope, and a group of young men in Oxford devoting themselves to plans for making their national Church strong and lovely.

On returning to England from his second journey (1814) Grellet discovered at Rochester a large ship full of prisoners of war, many of whom were Danish and Norwegian seamen who had been captured at sea. Here he found an opportunity for preaching and felt the response from some to be so genuine that a hope of being free to visit Scandinavia must have already been forming in his heart. The most striking events, however, of this stay in London were his meetings with the King of Prussia and the Emperor Alexander of Russia. Friends in that year's Yearly Meeting felt a call to present addresses to both these sovereigns, since they happened to be in London, and on each occasion Grellet was one of the small deputation appointed to act as ambassadors for peace. One of his companions was William Allen, a partner in the firm to be known afterwards as Allen & Hanburys, a man celebrated among Friends for his philanthropic work, who enjoyed a remarkably close and enduring friendship with Grellet. The Emperor was, as his visitors would have

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said, 'a man of tender spirit'. He was much affected by their simple statement on behalf of peace in the world and was so much interested that he once attended Meeting in London, and a month or two later, when driving to Dover, he recognized the Quaker dress of the inmates of a farmhouse in the country, stopped his carriage and introduced himself and his sister to Nathaniel Rickman, the owner.

Four years later Grellet was back in England, having in the interval visited the West Indies in the cause of the slaves. He now embarked on the most remarkable of all his journeys, which lasted from 1818 to 1820 and extended from Scandinavia through Russia to the Black Sea, and from Constantinople by Greece to Italy, Germany, and France. For most of the time he had the intimate companionship of William Allen ('poor solitary pair as we often feel to be') to support him. On a much later journey he wrote, 'Dear Allen was to set off for Frankfort a few hours after my departure, on his way home. I travelled on my way very solitary; but the Lord was with me: without Him I lack everything: in Him are all my fresh springs!' It is impossible to persuade the overcrowded modern mind to feel at home in contemplating a journey undertaken in that spirit. During their Russian visit he wrote, 'Now I wait, with deep reverence, to see what the Lord will do. As He put it into dear Allen's heart to come thus far with me, He can also give him a commission to accompany me further. To live by faith—how precious!' One feels that in his own eyes he had scarcely attained to this, but the evidence of his journal proves otherwise.

The visit to Russia meant renewed contact with the Emperor, who was deeply touched by the simple

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spirituality and, no doubt, by the initiative of his visitors. They gave him suggestions for the better education of his subjects, especially with regard to the Bible, and queried the wisdom of including sceptical and stoical maxims from Voltaire and Cicero in the educational syllabus for young soldiers. They urged upon him the necessity for penal methods which should not sink to mere retribution. They showed him sketches they had made of prisoners fettered for unduly long periods by particularly cruel methods. Together they prayed and together they worshipped in silence. All this encouraged Grellet, but the journey was not made up of such happy occasions. There were sleepless nights when he felt the burden of others' sufferings, for there was no self-centred piety about him, and the more he travelled the more he investigated all forms of social work, and the more he enquired into the state of prisons all over Europe. 'We visited the houses of correction (it should rather be houses of misery),' he wrote on one occasion in Russia; and in Italy he found that the authorities of one prison, full of young delinquents, who appeared to be models, obtained their results by daily floggings, which provoked him to the indignant question, 'Is this the method whereby you bring about such great reform among these boys? You may indeed excite the angry passions in them, by such doings, but you will never change their evil heart'.

The third journey through Europe is usually remembered on account of the four months' stay in St. Petersburg and the impression which the travellers made upon the Emperor, but after he was left by himself Grellet had an even more remarkable experience. Wherever he went he enjoyed access to potentates

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and dignitaries. Possibly inherited propensities gave him an assurance in visiting courts which would differ from the more stolid assurance of an Anglo-Saxon Quaker accustomed only to his own shop and counting-house. But one would hardly have expected to hear of an audience with the Pope. For the Church of his baptism Grellet felt complete abhorrence. He admits that when a Capuchin Friar in Athens asked him to visit him, he was 'at first unwilling to go, not expecting to meet in him anything calculated to minister comfort to my soul's distress'. When he caught sight of the monk at a distance, 'in the rough garb of the true Capuchin, with a long beard', he was the more prepossessed against him. The fear, however, turned out to be vain.

Previous to his audience with the Pope, Grellet was accorded the rare privilege of visiting the buildings and library of the Inquisition and inspecting their records. Here he seems to have been so thoroughly moved by history that he twice exclaims as other tourists would of some scene of uncommon beauty, that he 'could have spent days in the place'.

He did his best to remain consistent to Quaker scruple and talk to the Pope with head covered, but as he entered the room, a hand quickly but gently removed his hat.

The last journey in Europe began in 1831. The years between had seen the unfortunate cleavage in American Quakerism which was due to the fact that the Society had never faced the problem of its own theology. To put it briefly, the strife which now took place was a strife between two forms of thought which were, fundamentally, equally vague. One party wished to bind mysticism down to the mechanical re-

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petitions of those Evangelical formulæ which limit the Christian revelation to what Whittier aptly called:

a dead fact stranded on the shore  
Of the oblivious years.

Friends in this party were uncompromisingly Protestant, and naturally Grellet was loyal to their short-sighted view of theology, regarding as 'anti-Christ' the followers of Elias Hicks who formed the other party. These latter are often accused of preaching Unitarianism, but in their own eyes they were reverting to Fox and the primitive Quaker doctrine (never fully understood) of the Inward Light. In many ways the Hicks party stood far more certainly for the validity of mystical experience than did their ultra-Protestant fellow members. Perhaps all Western mysticism which stands outside the Catholic framework is fated to be more or less Unitarian. But the tragic division need not be enlarged upon in a portrait of Grellet. He himself once expressed, in words which are frequently quoted, the essentials of a religion which claims to dispense with the outward but never with the inward validity of sacraments, 'I think I can reverently say that I very much doubt whether, since the Lord by His grace brought me into the faith of His dear Son, I have ever broken bread or drunk wine, even in the ordinary course of life, without the remembrance of, and some devout feeling regarding, the broken body and the blood-shedding of my dear Lord and Saviour'.

Although his last European journey, which added Bohemia and Spain to the list of countries he visited, looks less imposing on paper than the Russian journey, it was actually his longest, extending to twenty-eight

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thousand miles. The account of it shows the same close observation of every place passed through, the same careful and inquisitive inspection of prisons, hospitals, and asylums, the same distribution of Bibles and tracts (in Prague, Grellet once returned to his inn to find in his room the waiter eagerly reading his own French Bible), the same audiences with important personages, including a meeting with Pestalozzi. For part of the time he was alone, but otherwise he had the company of 'dear Allen'.

In 1834 he sailed from Liverpool for the last time and for the rest of his life his travels were much restricted. He came of a long-lived family and lived until 1855—lived until after the Exhibition of 1851, and the death of Wordsworth, and the crisis of the Oxford Movement, and the abolition of slavery in British territory. He stands out in Quaker history, an austere but picturesque figure, erect, slender, and dignified. 'This gentleman,' wrote a German, 'has all the vivacity of a Frenchman with the solidity of the English,' and we like to read that even in old age his attentions to his wife were lover-like in their courtesy. But perhaps the most charming account of him was given by an English Friend, who could look back to her childhood and see herself, as a small girl, placing her stool at his feet and sitting there to gaze, captivated, at the stranger who spoke with an unusual intonation; whereupon the famous traveller put his hand on her head and called her 'Ma petite précieuse'.

## CONVERT AND CRITIC

THE nineteenth century was a tragic period for the Society of Friends. If we turn to the poets of the second half of the century for an elucidation of the problems then challenging the national soul, we can choose between the feverish journalism of *Locksley Hall* and *Maud*, and Browning's Nonconformist rhetoric; or we can painstakingly try to relate Arnold's unhappiness to particular trends of contemporary thought.

Alone, self-poised, henceforward man  
Must labour, must resign  
His all too human creeds and scan  
Simply the way divine.

What exactly had he in mind as he wrote that? Arnold was too sensitive to remain ignorant of the intellectual horrors which the Victorian mind was preparing for itself, and of the spiritual indigestion which must follow when Darwin and the Higher Criticism had begun to satiate. The Oxford Movement had proved, for those who knew how to sift non-essentials from essentials, that the modern mind can have little hope of comprehending the unity of all being unless it can bring itself to admit that the Reformation accomplished much less than some suppose.

Poets, however, are so rarely at home among denominations that it saves time to ask at once in so many words, 'How did Quakerism bear itself among the battle-cries of evolution and progress?' This stubborn attempt to demonstrate the *ethos* of primitive Christ-

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ianity not by historical argument, but by reliance on mystical experience, had now lasted in England for two hundred years. It had rejected all too human creeds in favour of the test of individual experience. Its intellectual elasticity helped it to survive, but also tended to put it at the mercy of new fashions in thought. It had, unfortunately, largely adopted the trite phrases of Evangelical Protestantism, which, it need hardly be pointed out, bears a merely verbal resemblance to that Evangelicalism which is an essential part of the Catholic faith. The contemporary Church of England had been saved from paralysis only by a strong injection of mediævalism, and the Society of Friends was equally in need of some anti-toxin against the Reformation. For the Protestant there exists no universe except that marked out by human politics. But although mysticism is not inherited, a tradition which stakes everything on the validity of mystical experience does produce characters which cannot be satisfied, where religion is concerned, with either a freedom or an authority which is merely conditioned by the State. The Victorian years might be a very bad time for the Society. Its membership might fall and fall until it reached most alarming figures. Whole families with strong Quaker traditions might join the Church of England, possibly because worldly prosperity tempted to such a step, but possibly because they hungered for what they could not find in their own denomination. Friends might begin to indulge energetically in that 'creaturely activity' which their forefathers mistrusted. They might do their best to preach the Gospel to the unconverted 'masses', although it needs very little knowledge of Quakerism to understand that it had become inex-

plicable to those who were illiterate in the learning of the natural man. In the seventeenth century it had been different. Vaughan might cry, thinking of the days of the patriarchs, 'O, how familiar then was heaven!' but a longing Victorian soul would feel that the description applied to the days of Fox and Penn. Nevertheless the mystical element in Quakerism was not dead.

The air of the 'seventies and 'eighties was thick with philosophies, and men were most dutiful in losing their faith. Hegelians sprang up as do nowadays economists and quack mystics. Everything being proved, where could an unsatisfied spirit turn if it were temperamentally mystical, but equally anti-Catholic? Surely to the Catholic party in the Church of England. But the one notable Victorian convert to Quakerism was far from being in sympathy with priests who disobeyed the Public Worship Act. She never had much sympathy at all with priests. 'I wholly disbelieve,' she wrote, 'in the professional competence of one human being to discipline the soul of another.' She had, indeed, a thoroughly Cambridge mind, with small room for intellectual decoration, as was not surprising in a member of the Stephen family.

Caroline Stephen was born in 1834 in a Kensington which still seemed remote from London and had market-gardens on the sites of the Museums and a turnpike at the end of Gloucester Road. Her mother was the daughter of John Venn, Rector of Clapham in the days of the 'Sect', and her father, Sir James Stephen, was the descendant of a disputatious Scotsman who had settled in England in the eighteenth century, after being shipwrecked on the south coast. From him, no doubt, came the vehement strain in

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Leslie Stephen, whose attachment to his sister Caroline (two years his junior) was so deep that in childhood they gave the impression of being as deeply sympathetic as if they had been twins.

The combination of strong intellect and Evangelical piety which characterized the Stephen family was sure to lead to reaction and extremes. The modern reader may forget that Sir Leslie Stephen, apologist for agnosticism, was once the Reverend Leslie Stephen of Trinity Hall. The mind of to-day simply cannot envisage that common phenomenon in high-principled and intellectual Victorian households, the conscientious unbeliever. At a much earlier date (1829) Sir James Stephen could report that he had been to a dinner at which a fellow-guest, 'in a whisper and with a look of horror,' pointed out another man as 'an infidel'. No whisper, no look of horror, alas, attends in the nineteen-thirties on any statement concerning belief or unbelief. But Caroline Stephen's father (of whom she wrote that to be his child was like being brought up in a cathedral) had too sensitive a soul to be indissolubly attached to the cruder qualities of Evangelicalism. She herself recorded that he felt 'an almost wistful sympathy with the religious experience of devout Roman Catholics', while an acquaintance, who possibly did not guess how true was the logic underlying the description, spoke of him as 'a transcendental Quaker with a tendency to Popery'. Leslie Stephen called his father a 'living categorical imperative', and the record of his long career as Under-Secretary for the Colonies, a sphere in which he found scope for his strong anti-slavery sympathies, bespeaks a lofty and humble character. When in 1849 he was appointed to the Regius Professorship of History at Cambridge,

there was a murmur against his supposed unorthodoxy on the doctrine of eternal punishment, but it was quickly silenced. He had hoped that his children would not grow up to be 'patent Christians, formalists, praters, cheats', and his hopes were certainly fulfilled.

Leslie and Caroline were near in age, and their elder brothers were too old to share their close childish companionship. In 1840 we have a pleasant glimpse of the brother and sister driving out daily with their mother, Leslie kneeling on the carriage seat, or sitting on the box, and reciting aloud in ecstasy long passages from *The Lady of the Lake*. Caroline never went to school and always retained a horror of a too highly systematized education. She feared the results of it, especially where women were concerned, and it was a dread of the stereotyped which made her at first unsympathetic to the appearance of women at Oxford and Cambridge. She doubted, not unwisely, whether the desire for education to be found in a few unusual spirits who took upon themselves to speak for others was really characteristic of her sex. Her education in a home where the father strictly discouraged slipshod English and loose thinking certainly produced one of those feminine Victorian intellects which reproach the feminine intellect of to-day by their willingness to be the best of woman and not an imitation of man.

The family were not settled in London during her childhood, for the mother and children lived temporarily at Brighton for the sake of Leslie's health, and later at Windsor, where the tall, thin, frail, excitable boy went, for a time, to Eton. Later there was a time when the family lived at Wimbledon, and winters were spent at Torquay, again on account of Leslie's delicacy. We hear of a holiday at Ilfracombe, where

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Leslie and Caroline instituted a 'Castle of Contentment' high among the rocks, in which they read and talked.

In editing a volume of extracts from her father's letters, Caroline referred to the 'Puritanism' of her home, but this may have been a concession to public opinion of a later epoch, for the household was obviously one which naturally expressed an inherent austerity in the most generous type of Victorian culture. Like the Dean's family in *The Angel in the House*, they showed in their very expressions

the light  
Of duties beautifully done.

One cannot imagine that the pursuit of pleasure would ever have attracted the orderly and fastidious Caroline Stephen. She was sufficiently feminine to enjoy, at the age of nineteen, 'a particularly becoming bonnet . . . lavender-coloured crape with white clematises within', and to complain in later life that tinted spectacles were 'most unbecoming'. She writes of having had many dancing lessons as a girl and having taken 'great pleasure in minuets and such graceful and quiet movements'. 'But balls,' she continues, 'did not suit my taste, or rather when I was at an age for them I was too austere . . . I tasted one or two when I was about thirty.' But she thought that the younger generation were the better for dancing. She was not so far ahead of her generation but that she could sit 'coiled up in an armchair all day long reading *The Heir of Redclyffe*'. We have the impression of a very serious youthfulness and the world-outlook of a Mrs. Humphry Ward heroine born a few decades

too soon. Like her brother, she had been trained by their father's strict criticism to write good English, and it is believed that her first published article, *First Attempts*, appeared in the formidable *Saturday Review*. Sir James died in 1859, and Caroline spent the next sixteen years as companion and eventually nurse to her mother. When Leslie Stephen finally left Cambridge in 1865, having discovered, not that his apparent creed was false, but that he did not believe it, he joined them for the two years before his marriage.

Caroline undertook much social work. She visited workhouses and was keenly interested all her life in nursing. There was a time when she longed to be able to enter the deaconess institution at Kaiserswerth. She knew Octavia Hill, and in later years she herself had some 'model dwellings' built in Pimlico and collected her own rents; but she identified herself to such an extent with the squalor and distress which she witnessed that she was finally obliged to give up her activities. Nevertheless, she was well qualified to write on the subject, and, in 1871, she published *The Service of the Poor*, a thoughtful and exhaustive 'enquiry into the reasons for and against' using the services of religious sisterhoods in nursing. Hospital nursing was professionally in its infancy, and we can all remember the Sister of Mercy who glides subtly into the sickroom in the Victorian novel. It is quite obvious that Caroline had a good, healthy, Protestant suspicion of everything connected with Rome and with religious orders. She condemned mortification as 'waste and insincerity'. She alluded very coldly to the idea that 'spiritual perfection is an art to be acquired by the practice of certain ascertained and so to speak technical rules'. She maintained that 'the experience of a

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life spent in honestly trying to do our duty will teach us more than can be learnt from any ecclesiastical system'. And many of her criticisms of the employment of religious as district visitors and nurses are very shrewd. She felt that the 'poor' might be tempted to talk in terms of hypocritical piety to a visitor wearing a religious habit. To regard almsgiving as a form of worship seemed to her to be bound to affect the nurse's attitude towards poverty as a social problem, and to consider the poor as the sole representatives of Christ seemed to her very dangerous.

Nor did she hesitate to speak out on the tempting aspect of the religious life as a vocation for women. Personal experience must have dictated the phrase 'the rich fallow ground of minds of young women living in almost compulsory leisure and more or less consciously hungering after fuller exercise for their affections'; but the idea of a sisterhood could never have possessed, for her, what she calls 'a confused luxuriance of associated charms'. She admitted that it was hard to live at home and at the same time keep up 'wretched dabblings in charity' whose claims one seemed to be perpetually asserting. But to enter a sisterhood seemed to her to be an evasion of the discipline of home life with its conflicting values and clash of opinions. Life within an order was too easy. It offered every chance of escaping from one's own weaknesses. It was also intellectually suspect.

'Pious and enthusiastic women are by nature but too prone to excess of religious emotion upon a narrow and unproved basis of belief. . . . Women, especially religious women, are ready enough to feel a passionate conviction of the truth of statements of which they could not explain any of the terms.'

The logical Stephen mind, inherited from legal ancestors, was not always gentle.

The book, which is crammed with statements of various religious constitutions, abounds in very sensible pleas for the recognition of the wants which are common to rich and poor. She held very strongly that to consider help given to material poverty as a supreme service overrated the mere alleviation of misery and raised the whole problem of suffering. She was never one of those who confuse suffering with evil and put their faith in Utopias built for the pleasure of only the natural man.

She felt all the horrors of poverty; she felt them intensely. Intercourse with the poor, she remarked, was almost like intercourse with those of an alien language. She knew the temptation to give them what one thought they ought to want, because what they really wanted seemed less worthy. But she believed that 'district visiting', when undertaken by women who had too much leisure, might have far more beneficial results than the most devoted ministrations of sisterhoods. The lay visitor led a normal life in a home where there were thoughtless or influential persons whom she could arouse. In her home there would be men whom she could profitably exhort to work in their wider spheres for necessary reforms. An enlightened woman, busy with social work, could inspire them as she gave them information. With a kind word, many years in anticipation, for the Hammonds and the Webbs, she wrote that washing feet and binding up wounds might be 'more picturesque' than helping a husband to study blue books and statistics, but should be merely a preliminary to the latter.

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Philanthropy by itself, however, could not satisfy an active and enquiring mind that desired, under the influences of heredity and of Cambridge, to submit everything to the test of reason. As she grew older she became more and more dissatisfied with her own attitude towards the Church of England. After being a communicant for twenty years she began to doubt whether the blessing attached to Holy Communion was subject to time and place and the outward and visible. She could not feel that the actual participation in the rite brought her an experience more profoundly revealing than could be attained by the solitary individual in private prayer and meditation. A dread of that 'formalism' and that 'prating' from which her father had prayed that his children might be free began to possess her soul. She considered the Church of England services. She reflected on the august beauty of the phraseology which summed up all the needs of humanity. 'Almighty God, to whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid' . . . 'those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask' . . . what better clothing could the soul desire for its true aspirations? And for the commonplace traffic of daily life, what truer recognition could there be of the childlike simplicity of the interdependent needs of soul and body? 'Lighten our darkness, we beseech Thee, O Lord, and by Thy great goodness defend us from all perils and dangers of this night' . . . 'whose service is perfect freedom.' A mind like Caroline Stephen's must have been peculiarly sensitive to the rich depths of the pregnant, straightforward Elizabethan English, and must have pondered over many sentences, wondering why they had ceased to

appeal to her as anything more than a piece of beautiful antiquity.

'The more vividly,' she wrote, 'one feels the force of its eloquence, the more, it seems to me, one must hesitate to adopt it as the language of one's own soul, and the more unlikely it is that such heights and depths of feeling as it demands should be ready to fill its magnificent channels every Sunday morning at a given hour.' The liturgy to which she had all her life been accustomed began to be 'as the armour of Saul in its elaboration, and in the sustained pitch of religious fervour for which it was meant to provide an utterance'. For nearly two years she conscientiously more or less excommunicated herself. It was no mere intellectual rebellion such as her brother Leslie experienced, for she was temperamentally mystical and was seeking no less than rejecting. But where could there be a home for an anti-authoritarian spirit which felt that communion with the divine nature was its necessary food and yet could not use the sacraments of the Church of England?

She was nearly forty by this time. Her brother Leslie once remarked that he agreed with Johnson that a young woman who thought for herself about religious matters was 'an odious wench', but the words could not contain any vestige of criticism of a sister to whom he was closely attached. One cannot imagine that a nature so reserved and balanced as was hers would obtrude its inner sufferings. Her own account of the event which brought her an immediate solution of her difficulties so effectively sums up the positive element, as apart from the mere freedom, in what she discovered that no one could write of her without quoting it.

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‘On one never-to-be-forgotten Sunday morning, I found myself one of a small company of silent worshippers, who were content to sit down together without words, that each one might feel after and draw near to the Divine Presence, unhindered, at least, if not helped, by any human utterance. Utterance I knew was free, should the words be given; and, before the meeting was over, a sentence or two were uttered in great simplicity by an old and apparently untaught man, rising in his place amongst the rest of us. I did not pay much attention to the words he spoke, and I have no recollection of their purport. My whole soul was filled with the unutterable peace of the undisturbed opportunity for communion with God, with the sense that I had found a place where I might, without the faintest suspicion of insincerity, join with others in simply seeking His presence. To sit down in silence could at least pledge me to nothing; it might open to me (as it did that morning) the very gate of heaven.’

She recognized at once the silence which differs infinitely from the mere absence of words. (It should be noticed that she had unconsciously hit upon a weakness in saying, ‘To sit down in silence would at least pledge me to nothing’.) She had found her spiritual home. The remainder of her life—she died in 1909—might lack outward events, owing to her delicate health, and increasing deafness restricted her social intercourse; but she was able to do much, in writing and speaking, to interpret the enigmatically Christian way of life which she had chosen.

Her mother died in 1875, and Caroline made a home for herself, first at Westcott near Dorking, and then at West Malvern. Although in some ways with-

drawn from the world, she could not have been called inhuman. Her love of children was very great, and she would take a long journey to see the newly born child of a niece or nephew. She cared for dogs and birds and gardens. After relating that her maids were almost in tears and she herself had been depressed for a few hours because a cherry-tree had to be cut down, she shrewdly remarked, 'How much strength of mind gardening requires!' Town life had meant for her an absorption in social work which exhausted her strength, so closely did she enter into the squalid misery of Victorian poverty. Circumstances, however, seemed to call her from Malvern to Cambridge. A niece was up at Newnham, who was later to be its Vice-Principal, Leslie Stephen's sons came up in their turn, her sister-in-law lived near. In 1895 she settled there, and her house, 'The Porch', from which she could see 'twenty-seven poplars beyond the wide green meadow . . . and an occasional gleam of the Granta through the trees', was her home for the rest of her life. She never travelled abroad after her girlhood, her letters say nothing of interest in art, and in later life she took no interest in politics. But there is no doubt that her clear intellectual vision deeply impressed many Quaker students in the university, both men and women. (It may not be irrelevant to point out that the typical Quaker intellectual is usually a Cambridge man, although fortunately there are exceptions.) It must have been inspiring to them to hear the essentials of what might, in their own homes, have sometimes become a formal faith, brought to life by the mystical intensity of this unusual convert. And, indeed, she was an unusual apparition, for persons with Eton and Cambridge in their family tradition did

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not turn Quaker sixty years ago any more than they do to-day. In some ways her co-religionists must have found her fearless criticism disconcerting, for she could point out to them exactly where they were diverging from primitive Quakerism. In *Quaker Strongholds* (1890), which, without being in any sense a history, gives a full statement of the constitution of the Society, she spoke too frankly against war for the peace of mind of some Friends, perhaps those whose sons and grandsons were to rush to arms in 1914. She declared that the modern Peace Association platform was quite unworthy of the original peace testimony of Quakerism. But, alas, Fox's statement on living 'in the life and power that takes away the occasion of all war' is a plant too sensitive for successful platform treatment. It dies under the thunder of propaganda and publicity. 'Love is life's only sign.'

She could also accuse birthright Friends of being ignorant of their own history and indifferent to the need of those who drew near them in searching for truth. With that sensitiveness which had recognized, as soon as she met with it, what mystery a living silence could hold, she doubtless perceived that the crude Evangelicalism of mission meetings for the 'masses' was a double failure; it missed the essentials of Quakerism and it accordingly missed the very persons who might be looking for what is summed up in that seventeenth-century nickname.

Another of her books, *Light Arising* (1908), contains some extraordinarily fine essays. Caroline Stephen might, in fact, be described as an Evelyn Underhill to the Society of Friends in her time, allowance being made for her Stephen antipathy to Catholicism, which seemed to her un-English, and for her complete silence

on all the details and interior discipline necessary for the development of the mystical sense. In this, her inherent individualism was at one with the traditional belief of even the finest souls among Friends, who have too often spoken as though system could only kill the soul and have sadly under-emphasized the need for rules of life.

She disliked referring to herself as a mystic, or to her own experience as mystical, without adding the qualification 'rational'. She spoke of a mysticism which 'renders to Reason that which is Reason's, as well as to intuition that which belongs to intuition'. Indeed, she even went so far as to wonder if 'agnosticism with mystery at the heart of it' might not truly define her faith. But she knew that whether this phrase of hers explained the metaphysic of Quakerism or not, that metaphysic meant a universe different from the Protestant universe; meant, instead of a collection of unrelated dogmas, standing like tombstones when man had buried faith, a rhythm and an unfolding, although 'unfolding' does not here refer to the curious progressive deity of the Modernists. Accordingly, she felt that it was illogical for Friends to send delegates to Free Church Councils; her warning against the increase of the practice is even more urgently needed to-day, when proposals for reunion find too many supporters who do not stop to reflect that inaccurate thought and a flouting of history are not the foundations of the truest charity, and forget that there is a noble intolerance which is more respectful to its opponents than forced unity.

The convert ought to be able to describe in clear terms that for which he has struggled. Those who habitually use particular forms of worship and thought

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are sometimes hampered by a mass of traditional imagery and phrases which have been too often repeated. For example, the onlooker is usually puzzled, if respectful, over what can be possibly meant by speaking when 'moved by the Spirit'. If he has explored the matter at all, he will have grasped that, whatever happens when Friends speak in Meeting, the result is neither a discussion nor a debate, far less the exhibitionism of the Groups. To subject it to psychological treatment is neither meet nor right. Perhaps Caroline Stephen, coming to an experience of the phenomenon as a mature and remarkably thoughtful woman, whom no one could associate with ranting emotionalism, did succeed in putting the truth about it into clear words. She faced the matter with common sense and reverence. (Reverence, a quality endangered by much of modern religious thought, was supremely characteristic of her.) She wrote that the attitude implied by worshipping in a silence which anyone was free to break, meant being ready to 'throw open the deepest human powers to the purest Divine influences'. 'The result we look for,' she added, 'is the fruit of a devout intelligence, first purified, and then swayed, by the immediate action of divine power.' It sounds an enormous claim; but if we consider it not as the egoistic assertion of some one person but as the vital principle of a group, a principle which has never been without exponents in the Church from the days of Tertullian, perhaps the apparent arrogance of individual conversion shrinks to inoffensive proportions.

Caroline Stephen was a remarkable woman and belonged to a remarkable family whose hereditary gifts still amaze us. Without being distorted by feminism, she was finely typical of Victorian woman-

hood. A woman of the same type living to-day, and suffering from the same spiritual hunger, is as likely to choose Quakerism, but she may more probably choose what Caroline Stephen would have called 'sacerdotalism', either Roman or English. But the facts seem to suggest either that women of that type are non-existent or that they prefer a system of ordinances and outward sacraments. Religion is sometimes referred to in some circles as a rather feeble, essentially womanish preoccupation, but the balance of the sexes is kept pretty steadily among Friends. Many symptoms, however, such as the nature of the books they write, go to suggest that the modern intellectual woman has little use for religion.



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